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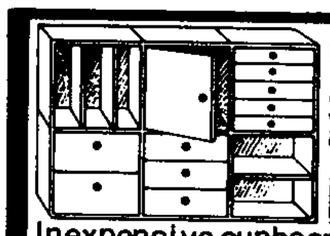

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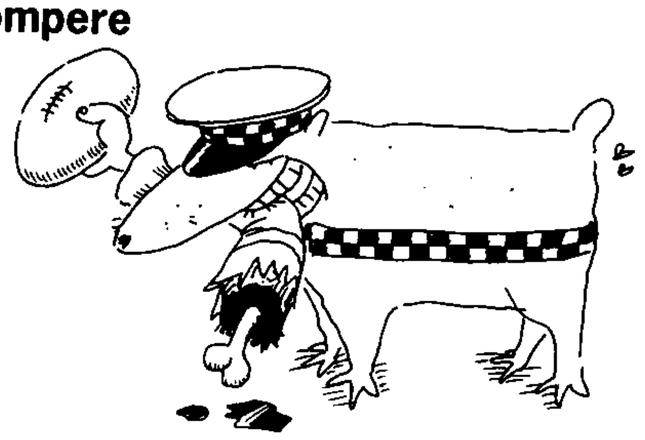

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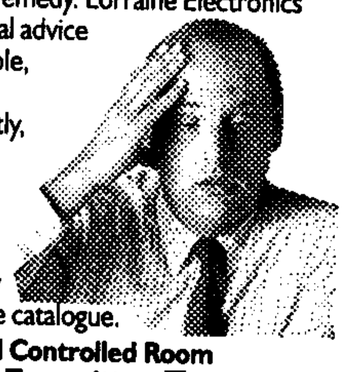

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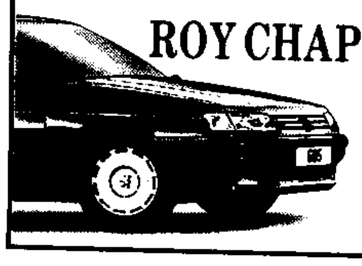

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Gnome

THERE IS nothing more heartbreaking at this time of year than the moment when we realise that our children no longer believe in the cosy Christmas fairytale that they have accepted without question for so long.

How much safer and more reassuring for us all if the story were true! But, alas, the real world intrudes, the fantasy recedes and the kindly white-haired old gentleman takes his place in the world of myth rather than the here and now.

But some of us wish to believe that at this season we will be showered with good things by a benign, supernatural uncle. We want to believe the comforting legends passed down from year to year. And why not?

I, for one, am proud to say Norman Lamont does exist! There are green shoots! There is a recovery!

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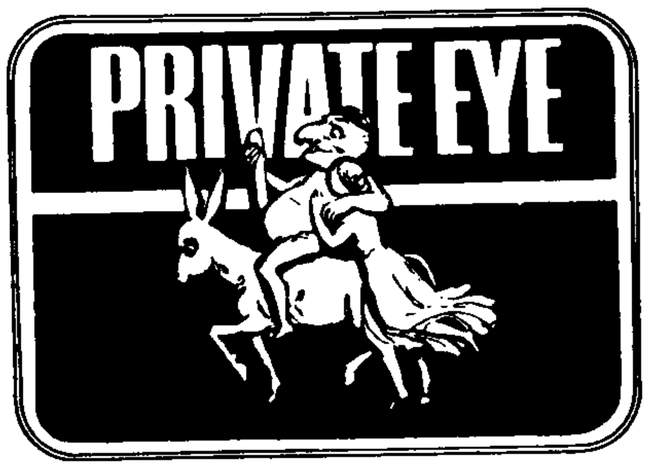


COLOUR SECTION

ONE MAN who must be a little upset at the lord chief justice's scathing remarks about the police interviews which convicted the Cardiff Three is Mr Justice Leonard, who presided at the trial and allowed the interviews as evidence.

Mr Justice Leonard's contribution to criminal justice reached its peak in 1989 when he was one of three appeal court judges to dismiss an appeal by the three men convicted ten years earlier of murdering newspaper boy Carl Bridgewater. When the prosecution witness was described in evidence by a psychiatrist and several others as a "pathological liar", Mr Justice Leonard promptly described him as "a witness of truth".

THE REPORTED £3 million pound settlement in the "Libel Action of the Century" between Virgin (Richard Branson) and BA (Lord King), if true, is a terrible blow for BA's publicity director David Burnside, who has had to handle the unpleasant fall-out following thefts from dustbins, etc.

Burnside is an Ulsterman and a former supporter of Vanguard, the extremist Protestant organisation. He is also, of course, a close friend and adviser of the *Mirror*'s new chief executive, David Montgomery.

Quite how such a very right-wing character came to be a PR director at BA is a mystery, which can only be understood after studying the close connections between Mrs Margaret Thatcher, her former aide Ian Gow, MI5 and the BA chairman, Lord King. The whole package is neatly tied by the fact that Lord King's closest friend in the press was Robert Maxwell, Montgomery's illustrious predecessor.

THE NUCLEAR industry still can't get its sums right.

Last November John Guinness, chairman of British Nuclear Fuels, told the *FT* that the ruling by the pollution inspectorate that he must not start up his Thorp plant at Sellafield was costing £1 million a week. By December that had risen to £2 million (see Coal v. Gas, *Eye* 809); but BNFL has now improved on even this figure.

Tam Dalyell, the pro-nuclear Labour MP, claims the delay will cost £108 million for nine months (or 36 weeks), which works out at £3 million a week.

In addition, Guinness has revised his forecast for the profit the company will make if it is given the go-ahead. The company has always claimed it would produce £500 million in its first 10 years. Guinness has now told the *Cumbrian Evening News* that the profit figure will be £900 million. Who said accountancy isn't creative?

THE COLLAPSE of the Plasser railway machinery corruption trial at the Old Bailey was greeted with loud sighs of relief in the "corporate entertainment" industry.

The judge's decision to stop what was expected to be a test case against the defendants, including BR's former director of engineering, Stuart Currie, and the prosecution's subsequent withdrawal of proceedings against others, including Tory MP Harry Greenway, could hardly have been better timed, coming just as Christmas approached its climax. All those jolly seasonal hampers and crates of champagne could be despatched without fear of either donor or recipient being charged with corruption.

Four years of investigation by transport police, during which every member of the BR board was interviewed, served only to demonstrate the purity and legitimacy of business entertainment. An industry with a turnover of hundreds of millions need no longer feel threatened — and the hordes of guests who know or care little or nothing about opera, or all those other sponsored activities, can booze or doze away to their hearts' content in the private boxes and tents, which their hosts have hired for the noblest marketing reasons.

LAST SUMMER, after the imposition of UN sanctions on Serbia, it was revealed that Marks & Spencer was importing children's shirts made in a Serbian factory controlled by the gruesome Slobodan Milosovic (*Eye* 802).

David Sieff, of M&S, tried to forestall protests by insisting it was a one-off: never again, he promised, would M&S source its goods from "Yugoslavia".

M&S's supplier of children's clothing, the Hull firm of Dewhirst, has just imported another three lorryloads of the shirts. Unlike the previous consignment, which came from Serbia, these shirts were produced in Macedonia, which is not covered by UN sanctions. However, the Milosovic-controlled company which produced the last consignment, Genex, also has factories in Macedonia. Dewhirst would not say this week whether the latest batch of shirts was produced by Genex.

When the lorries reached the Italian border, in mid-December, they hit a problem. Since Macedonia is not recognised by Italy — or, indeed, by any other EC country — the Italian authorities refused to accept the import documents. The convoy had to wait for a couple of weeks in the town of Ancona while new papers were procured, showing the shirts' place of origin as the non-existent "Yugoslavia", rather than Macedonia.

The truckloads of shirts were finally allowed to leave Ancona on Monday this week, and were due to reach Hull on an overnight ferry from Zeebrugge on the morning of Wednesday 30 December. Thus Marks & Sparks now finds itself the proud possessor of a consignment of clothes whose source — officially, at least — is given as Yugoslavia, the very place from which it vowed not to import goods.

Does M&S have any qualms about this? "Shirts were transferred for production from Serbia to Macedonia," a spokesman confirmed to the *Eye* this week. "But we have made it very clear to Dewhirsts that we will not accept anything from sanctions-related areas or sanctions-related people." Presumably Marks and Spencer will now investigate whether the shirts did indeed come from Genex. For if Slobodan Milosovic is not a "sanctions-related person", it is hard to know who is.

"I'm not going in there – it's a no-fly zone"

THE *SUN*'S leaking of the Queen's Christmas broadcast caused anger among Tory MPs and seems certain to hasten legislative curbs on the press.

Always ready to do the Digger's bidding and bash the Beeb, *Sun* editor Kelvin McKenzie loyally told Radio 4's *The World at One* it was a BBC mole who supplied the pirate tape of the broadcast. This story was then contradicted by his assistant editor (news), Leif Kalfayan, and the paper's deputy editor, Stewart Higgins, both of whom went on radio and TV to deny that the source was a BBC employee and insist that this was the most fantastic scoop since Watergate.

This confusion gave cynics the impression that BSkyB, the Digger's wretched satellite service, had been the source of the leak, since it too had received an embargoed tape of the broadcast. By mid-afternoon on the day the story ran, even Tory MPs on the Commons media committee were publicly questioning the wisdom of newspaper and TV cross-ownership. Next, a statement was issued to the Press Association on behalf of Kelvin McKenzie reiterating his earlier assertion that the paper's source was from within the BBC (*Methinks he doth protest too much. Ed.*)

COLLEAGUES of Paul "Loonybins" Johnson are increasingly worried for the old boy's mental health.

His hysterical full-page attack on the government in the *Sunday Times* just before Christmas followed an equally rabid piece in the *Spectator* a month earlier in which he revealed that he felt nothing but "cold contempt" for John Major and his ministers.

Johnson, lest we forget, is also a columnist for the *Daily Mail*; and although the *Mail* itself criticised Major and Lamont in the aftermath of Black Wednesday, its editor, Paul Dacre, soon obeyed an order from his boss, Sir David Fester, to stop attacking the government. So, after its brief flirtation with the Thatcherite dissidents, the paper is now a loyal Tory rag again.

But where does this leave Johnson, who is growing ever more dissident by the day? Simple: the *Mail* has decided to discourage its principal political commentator from writing about politics!

This does not leave him with many subjects to address. The *Mail* was keen to encourage him to concentrate on royal matters, but it may now be having second thoughts. Last month Johnson submitted an article to the *Spectator* arguing that the Prince and Princess of Wales's marital troubles — if indeed there were any — would soon blow over, and Charles and Diana would make a fine king and queen in due course. When the *Speccie*'s editor, Dominic Lawson, read the piece he rang Loonybins. "Er, I think you ought to know that they're going to announce their separation this Wednesday," he said. Johnson, who likes to think of himself as a royal expert, was loftily dismissive. "Nonsense, nonsense, dear boy," he replied.

HAVING sacked most of the hacks who actually produced his newspapers, *Mirror* boss David "Rommel" Montgomery is now reaping the whirlwind in the form of a blizzard of damaging mistakes.

The sports pages are particularly accident-prone. A report on a game between Ipswich and Manchester City last month, published on page 36 of the edition covering the north-west of England, was full of praise for the Manchester club's performance. Unfortunately, due to the lack of competent staff, page 31 of the same edition carried a report of the same game written by the same hack — but from a pro-Ipswich point of view. The latter piece had been supposed to appear only in East Anglian copies of the *Mirror*.

Another morning, after both Liverpool and Everton had lost to London clubs, the back page of the north-western edition carried a huge splash headline that had been meant for London copies only — COCKNEYS 2, SCOUSERS 0. As can be imagined, this went down none too well. Fans on Merseyside have long boycotted the *Sun* because of its coverage of the Hillsborough disaster; now it looks as if they may boycott the *Mirror* as well.

DIRECTORS at Mirror Group Newspapers shivered in terror when they read the words of Mr Justice Chadwick in the case of Mirror Group Pensioners v. Ian Maxwell.

Ordering Maxwell to pay half a million pounds to the pension funds his father had plundered, the judge was heard to say: "I can see considerable force in the contention that Mr Ian Maxwell ought to have made it his business to know a great deal more about the affairs of the company than he appears to have done..."

Might not those same words apply to other directors who took perks, cars and fees from Maxwell on the pretence that they were in charge of Mirror Group Newspapers while not noticing that every single penny in profit made in its first few months as a public company was stolen by the fat man?

About £100 million went — but where were Charles Wilson, Sir Robert Clark and Roger Eastoe all that time? Mr Justice Chadwick knows his stuff (he was prosecutor in the first Guinness trial); and if the three directors are eventually done for what they didn't notice under Maxwell, where does that put the man they voted for as chief executive, David "Rommel" Montgomery?

THERE HAVE been murmurings of discontent at the *News of the Screws*, where managing editor Stuart Kuttner has been exceedingly generous to a freelance hack, his old chum Nick "Sneaky" Davies. "Sneaky" was the man at the centre of the Mirrorgate affair who couldn't "remember" that he'd been to Ohio to meet an arms dealer, with the result that he was sacked from his job as foreign editor of the *Mirror* for lying. He has since set himself up as a royal expert, producing a fatuous and uninformed quickie book on Charles and Diana, and flogging vaguely plausible though unprovable royal stories to the tabloids.

Last November "Sneaky" persuaded Kuttner to take a story about how "Prince Charles is on the brink of throwing away his right to the throne for love of Camilla Parker Bowles, claim friends." The

JUST FANCY THAT!!

Other intimate friends who have proved their loyalty and are likely to remain in her circle are her former flatmate Carolyn Bartholomew,

Evening Standard 10.12.92 p.2

Gone from her circle now are those former friends Carolyn Bartholomew

Evening Standard 10.12.92 p.10

Screws' royal correspondent, Clive Goodman, refused to have anything to do with the story, which eventually ran on the front page under the joint byline of Elizabeth Grimsditch (a pen-name of Fiona MacDonald-Hull) and Chris Boffey, a news hack.

Davies received £20,000 for this drivel, which amounted to little more than a few paragraphs, but an internal row ensued with Bob Warren refusing to pay the sum out of the news department budget and Kuttner having to make the payment from a general slush fund. No doubt Davies is suitably grateful to Kuttner.

IT IS always sad when the *Daily Mail*'s conscience wrestles with its time-honoured loyalty to the security services, but this seems to be happening in the case of Andrew Balfour.

Balfour, an experienced but relatively junior embassy official in Dubai, once handed out visas for entry into Britain. A junior MI6 official, sent out to track down what the foreign office (probably rightly) thought was a racket in visas, stumbled across "evidence" which convinced him Balfour was at the centre of this racket.

Acting on this report, Balfour was detained in the embassy, flown back to London, interrogated by FO officials and MI6, and even arrested under the prevention of terrorism act. Certain that it had its prey, MI6 then played its press card, planting a front page story in the *Daily Mail* under the by-line of chief reporter David Williams. It "revealed" that a "senior British diplomat has been held by Scotland Yard under the Prevention of Terrorism Act". The article then went on: "Special branch detectives investigating Iranian terrorist movements in Britain arrested Andrew Balfour, 39..."

Printing the story and naming Balfour before he was even charged was a new departure even in *Mail* smear tactics. But since the source was MI6, the *Mail* believed it was better to claim a scoop rather than wait for a charge and let the rest of Fleet Street nibble at the same cherry.

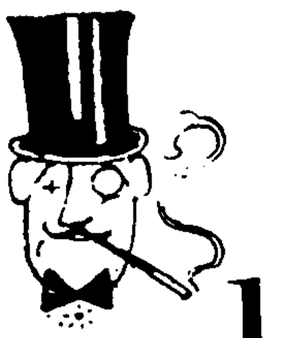
But alack-a-day for the *Daily Mail*! Balfour could answer all the questions asked. He was, in fact, working with the intelligence services — without the brilliant young MI6 detective knowing a thing about it. There was *no* criminal case against him, as the then attorney-general Sir Patrick Mayhew was obliged to admit.

The foreign office then behaved with its normal instinct for English fair play: it sacked Balfour, who has been out of work ever since. When he tried to sue the FO for unfair dismissal, it then slapped an "immunity notice" on him, denying him the documents he needs, and even argued (so far successfully) that an unfair dismissal case cannot even be heard if the foreign secretary says British intelligence was involved.

After the government's Matrix Churchill arms-for-Iraq cock-up, "immunity notices" became news again. Williams of the *Mail*, always a little embarrassed by the front-page revelations in 1989 which turned out to be of such little substance, wrote another story for the rag, this time favourable to Balfour, comparing the immunity notices in the two cases.

The *Mail* ran Williams's story — but only in its northern editions. For editions read in Whitehall (and most of the country, for that matter) the story was tactfully removed.

Rommet



Grovel

COMPLIMENTS and best wishes for the new year to *Sun* editor Kelvin McKenzie, who has unexpectedly found romance.

He separated from his wife towards the end of last year, and is now enjoying the company of Joanna Duckworth, gorgeous, pouting twentysomething blond secretary of departing *Sunday Times* books editor (and would-be lothario) John Walsh.

Kelvin met Ms Duckworth in the St George's swimming baths, just across from the *Sun*'s Wapping offices, where he swims every lunchtime in an effort to restrain his adipose tissue.

MY AWARD for feeblest decision of 1992 goes to Liam Carson, senior manager of the Groucho Club, who has agreed — quite bewilderingly — to give Paul "Raging Bull" Pickering one last chance instead of banning him from the premises for good.

In early December, Pickering had to be escorted from the club by police after biting a waiter on the shoulder and aggressively berating a manageress. It had been hoped that he would join the ranks of reprobates who are denied entry to the club — men such as Lord Patrick Conyngham, who urinated out of a first-floor window on to a policeman's helmet and vomited on the bar; Daniel Farson, who mistook the chest-high bar for an old-fashioned urinal; and Tom Bantock, who deposited a lighted cigarette in a member's jacket pocket.

Carson is now facing mutiny from his staff, none of whom is keen to serve "Raging Bull" in future.

I AM GLAD that one hard-working member of the royal family, Marina Mowatt (née Ogilvy), is receiving the respect she deserves.

As if the money she receives for her brilliant weekly column in the *Sunday Express* were not enough, La Mowatt has now been paid the ultimate compliment by Anna Stewart, the rag's American-born features editor.

Stewart, renowned for her lack of knowledge of anything remotely British, has been heard to ask who are such personalities as Rowan Atkinson and Neville Chamberlain. When she heard that Ms Mowatt was a cousin to the Queen, she greeted the vastly overpaid columnist at their first meeting with a curtsy.

Just one of the many entries in my Eve Pollard Royal Ascot design competition (V. Wheeler). Results soon...

THE QUEEN has suffered enough without the attentions of Peter Hain, the angry Labour MP for Neath.

Hain, who spent his youth trying to disrupt enjoyable rubgy matches with teams from South Africa, will reopen the royal tax debate as soon as parliament reconvenes. Mischievously he will ask Michael Heseltine, president of the board of trade, how much Brenda costs taxpayers in free postage.

Soon, no doubt, other pettifogging MPs will ask for clarification on the other taxes our respected royals don't pay.

How many vehicles in the royal car fleet, for example, are exempt from the £110 road fund licence? And does Brenda pay for television licences at her many residences? This last point struck me as I stood proudly to attention listening to her splendid Christmas broadcast.

● *IS my friend Conrad Black all right? The proprietor of the Torygraph group seems to have become peculiarly unbalanced on the subject of women's legs.*

Twice before Christmas he berated the Daily Torygraph's fashion editor, Kathryn Samuel, for promoting hide-all long skirts on her pages.

First, at "Hitler" Hastings's Christmas bash for section heads at Brooks's, Samuel was surprised to learn that her proprietor took such an interest in her pages. He declared that in his opinion the mania for long skirts was a conspiracy got up by the fashion industry (very perceptive). But when Samuel invited him to contribute an article on the subject, he said: "Oh no. I can't be seen as someone who enjoys looking at the thighs of young women."

The following day, the managing director's committee of the Torygraph Group hosted a lunch for staff on the 50th floor of Canary Wharf. Again Samuel encountered Black, who told her he was serious about the matter and wanted no more women in long skirts on her page (an instruction defiantly ignored on the Monday after Christmas).

Torygraph hacks believe Black's obsession with revealing mini skirts may be prompted by his wife, whose penchant for displaying her own pins is well known. When Amiel worked on a newspaper in Toronto, she had the habit of walking through the newsroom with her raincoat open and nothing but a colourful basque underneath. Perhaps Amiel might model for Samuel's fashion page herself — with one of the paper's skimpy tabloid pull-outs wrapped revealingly around her midriff.

Pip Pip!

Pseuds Corner

QUESTION: Can anyone explain the words from the song A Whiter Shade Of Pale by Procol Harum?

THE WORDS are a psychedelic kaleidoscope of fragments: allusions to and images from a treasury of sources (some real, some imagined). Part of their purpose is not to be meaningful in any conventional sense, but to challenge the conventions of meaning. To begin to "explain" the words, we must first recognise their evocative power — a sort of mystical melancholy. The words derive from the musical setting borrowed from Bach's Suite No 3 in D Major.

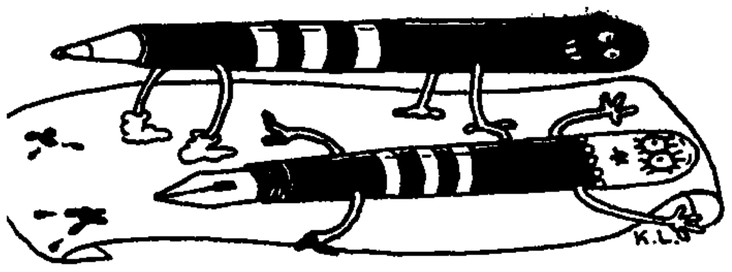
But crucial to an understanding of the words, it is necessary to place the song in the context of the "Summer of Love" in 1967. Together with other

examples of psychedelic pop — for instance, Sunshine Superman (Donovan), Purple Haze (Jimi Hendrix Experience) and Hole In My Shoe (Traffic) — A Whiter Shade Of Pale attempts to articulate the retreat of "reason" and the cleansing of the doors of perception ("She said there is no reason/And the truth is plain to see...") in the mind-expanding experience of an acid trip. — *John Storey, lecturer in Cultural Studies, University of Sunderland.*

The Guardian

O'REILLY — On Nov. 30, 1992, to CAMILLA and CHARLES, a son (Chardin Dante Ashforth), a brother for Cosmo.

Announcements
Daily Telegraph



Cartier
THE COUGAR PEN

The blank page is my kingdom and writing is my unique pastime. I am the brother of the Panthère men.

A true object of precision, my body and my cap are godron striped and coated in a rare material the colour of grey anthracite that is of limitless strength.

Original, I certainly am, with gold or silver detailing.

Elegant too, my cap decorated with an onyx cabochon and my case encircled with the famous three gold rings, the signature of the master jeweller.

Subtle, I exist in two versions: fountain pen or ball point pen.

Just for you, I will let myself glide gently over your white sheets of paper.

Cartier Press Release

He [Thom Gunn] explains his lack of fear, dismissing his life as easily, as lightly as if he were thistledown: "There wouldn't be any sadness in my dying tomorrow. I've travelled, I've been happily in love for 40 years, *and* I've read *The Brothers Karamazov* three times."

Observer

CONTRIBUTORS: H. Donnison, Justin O'Reilly, Andy Tribble, E. Strobes.

£10 paid for entries

THOSE protesting at the department of transport's vandalism at Twyford — carried out by the government's fave construction company, Tarmac — are asking whether there can possibly be a link between the following facts:

- In 1985 the department of transport paid Winchester College almost £400,000 in the compulsory purchase of 38.5 acres of Twyford Down, the price being way above the market value.
- Winchester College, a fine old English public school which stands for the highest traditions of British fair play etc, is seeking a court order to evict from its land the protestors against the department of transport development, who are occupying some of the area.

AFTER cocking up its case for rail privatisation on a recent *Panorama*, the government has given up the public relations battle and is falling back instead on committee rigging.

To prevent its crazy "franchising" scheme from being savaged by the select committee on transport, the powerful but somewhat obscure body, the committee of selection (which is controlled by the government) has chosen two diehard privatisers, Nigel Evans and Nicholas Hawkins, to sit on transport.

Unless they, too, go native, they should be enough to sway the balance and ensure that the committee's forthcoming rail report does not railroad the government. That means the main line of defence against the insane policy is now in the House of Lords, where Ridley and Whitelaw, who both made caustic appearances on *Panorama* and do not share John MacGregor's ignorance about rail, will take up the cudgels.

Meanwhile stories that Chris Green, the charismatic (for a railwayman) InterCity director, is in cahoots with Richard Branson can be ignored. Apart from his keen opposition to any break-up of InterCity, Green is unimpressed by Branson's publicity-seeking ways — like wanting to Virginise the Gatwick Express by installing videos, footwarmers and dancing girls to lighten the tedium of a journey lasting a mere 30 minutes when what users want is a cut in the obscene fares.

SEEKING to justify coal imports, John Baker, chief executive of National Power, told the Commons select committee on trade and industry that he bought from "reputable" countries — places, he said, like Colombia.

There seems to be confusion, however, about just how reputable Colombia really is. A recent study, reported in the *Independent Magazine*, claimed that children as young as five work illegally in the mountains of Boyaca from 8am until 6 or 7 at night, and that "if they are paid at all, which is rare, earn £1 to £2 a day". A simultaneous report in *Guardian Weekend* said the average take-home pay at the most modern pit at El Cerrejon was £70 a week.

Either way, Mr Baker clearly knows a bargain when he sees it.

THE QUESTION asked by almost everyone at British Coal after the pit closure fiasco is: how on earth did Neil Clarke get his job as chairman?

Clarke had been a chairman before, of course. In 1984, he became chairman of the gold bullion dealers Johnson Matthey. He was chairman when Johnson Matthey Bank suddenly went bust in circumstances not dissimilar to the BCCI scandal several years later (lending far too much to businessmen with rather little credit).

A cluster of banks gathered together to stage an emergency rescue. Among them was Standard Chartered Bank, not entirely unrelated to a company called Charter Consolidated, whose deputy chairman and chief executive happened to be an accountant called, er, Neil Clarke.

Clarke was also closely involved in the closure of Johnson Matthey's Wembley factory in north London where a great many people lost their jobs in nasty circumstances. There was, of course, no law about consultation on that occasion. Bosses could sack at will, which is no doubt why Clarke went ahead so obstinately with the coal pit closures.

HOUSING ministers have not been slow to pat themselves on the back for their "dramatic programme" to ease the property crisis by buying back repossessed houses. But, as one might expect from such a discredited government, there is a catch.

In his autumn statement Norman Lamont, the chancellor, made much of the boast that the government was going to spend £580m before Christmas buying up repossessions. The scheme was trumpeted as showing that the government really was prepared to pay big sums to help the poor and needy, the money being made available to housing associations — ideologically sound for the government since housing associations are "social homes".

But in the housing association movement there is concern at the way the money is being distributed.

On the orders of the Housing Corporation, for example, which is now so stuffed with Tory nominees that it could be a branch of central office, a huge tranche of money has been allocated to buying up "repossessed" houses formerly owned by, er, *the government*.

Old properties belonging to the ministry of defence lead the field, closely followed by police training houses, many of them associated with the Police College at Hendon. All this money — probably at least half the total — will go straight back where it came from: to the exchequer (prop: N. Lamont).

Moreover, the private developers who have benefited most from the government "windfall" have — by pure coincidence — been those who in the past (cf. Tarmac and the PSA) have stuck up for the Tories or doled out money to central office. Barratt is a particular favourite. No decent Tory can forget the way the developer helped Mrs Thatcher by flying her round the country in an election campaign before she was even prime minister.

This bulk-buying of repossessed houses has, say housing association experts, nothing like the same effect on the homeless figures as would a careful plan to buy up individual repossessed properties in areas where homes are most needed. But that would be take much more time and be much more expensive.

KINNOCKITES are launching a new magazine with which to regain the intellectual high ground and ensure that Labour loses the next election and the one after that.

Called *Renewal*, a publicity leaflet in advance of the first issue reveals that it will be produced by a phalanx of exciting has-beens and never-weres (*Shurely "the cream of enlightened liberal-left academia"? Ed.*) from Birkbeck, Goldsmith's, the City of London Poly and Sheffield university.

Alongside preaching bores in red specs will be some genuinely exciting names, however: men like Tony Blair, the only member of the Labour party a normal person could ever vote for, as well as visionaries like David Marquand, Patricia Hewitt, Marjorie Mowlam and Carole Tongue and, er, Tony Blair.

All the magazine needs to regain the high ground is someone on its staff who can spell, however. Then it really can "question orthodoxy's" (without an apostrophe) during the period of "the Tories unpopularity" (with an apostrophe) at a time when the tide is not turning "in the Tories favour" (with an apostrophe).

Renewal's first broadside on the Tories' pisspoor education policy should make fascinating reading.

'Backbiter'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

SHEFFIELD

IF LOSING other people's money is the yardstick, Sheffield was easily Britain's rottenest borough in 1992.

Not content with losing £25 million on the 1991 world student games — a fiasco which "couldn't fail to break even", council officials said — the Labour-run authority must now pay £1 million to the Co-op bank after underwriting loans made to a private company, Laindon Properties, set up by council leader Mike Bower.

Laindon was an off-the-shelf company Bower reconstituted in the 1980s as organiser for the Sheffield Co-operative Development Agency. He wanted Laindon to take over the disused council-owned Attercliffe Baths and revamp them into plush office headquarters for the student games organising committee, Universiade GB.

But Laindon never bothered to ask the council for permission to carry out renovations, and nor did it have the courtesy to tell Universiade GB it would be moving in to Attercliffe Baths. So in 1989 when Universiade GB was wound up, the new games' body, headed by council housing boss Ray Gridley, wasn't even slightly interested in moving in. (Bower was then merely the council's personnel chair. Now leader, he recently made Gridley the scapegoat for the games' huge losses.)

Laindon Properties has since tried to sell the baths site, but thanks to the Lawson-Thatcher slump in the property market there has been no taker. The baths remains empty save for one tenant paying £10,000 a year in rent.

Laindon now has the property on a 125-year lease. An £185,000 premium should have been paid to the council for use of the building 18 months ago. Last March the deadline was extended. Laindon still hasn't paid this bill, nor two annual licence payments of £18,500 each, nor a £20,000 rates bill — nor £20,000 to a firm of building contractors!

Laindon's total debt to the council is £245,000. It also owes the Co-op more than £900,000 in loans made through an intermediary company, Clearfuture, another off-the-shelf firm set up by the Co-operative Development Agency and owners of the latter's building.

Bower, who has always declared an interest when Laindon has been raised at council meetings, resigned as Laindon director the day before the council agreed to redevelop Attercliffe Baths. He is now the company's projects manager.

Has Sheffield learnt anything from this debacle? No. A confidential internal report says the council should be able to recover "all or most" of Laindon's £1.1 million debt by taking over its assets. But what assets? All Laindon has is Attercliffe Baths, which is, er, ultimately owned by the council and which no one wants to buy anyway.

Desperate officials are trying to stave off Laindon's imminent collapse. It wouldn't be in either the council's or the bank's interest to pull the plug, so a deal will be cobbled together in which Laindon pays off its debts over four years while the bank takes over the marketing of a building nobody wants.

Had a private company with no town hall connections moved into a council-owned building without first seeking permission, hocked itself to the hilt with bank loans underwritten by the council and then defaulted on its payments to the town hall, one can imagine the outcry from Labour councillors. But then Laindon was the work of the current council leader...

FACT: While libraries, old people's homes, play schemes and public lavatories in Sheffield are shut to save money, councillors' expenses remain unaffected.

BIRMINGHAM

MEDIA "guru" Vincent Hanna, hired by Birmingham council at £1,200 a day to improve its disastrous public relations, is at the centre of the city's biggest PR cock-up for years.

Hanna was called in last summer by his old chum Sir Dick Knowles, the Labour leader, after Lynda Longbottom, the disastrous head of public affairs who cost the city £200,000 for two years' work, was sacked.

So far Hanna has claimed £65,000 for himself and £28,000 for his firm, Viewpoint Communications, plus expenses. In return he has told the city what everyone already knew — that the city's PR costs more than £30 million a year and is a disaster. He claims his fat fee is for reorganising the media department; but all he has done is return it to something approaching its pre-Longbottom state.

In fact Hanna should have paid more attention to his own PR. Birmingham, hit by government cuts and bad budgeting, has had to slash 3,000 jobs. Everyone expected that; but what no one expected *was the announcement*, less than 24 hours later, that Hanna was to be given *another* contract worth £35,000 for just 30 days' work.

Although Hanna recommended himself for an open ended contract at £1,200 a day, chief executive Roger Taylor had the sense to limit it to just 30 days, for Hanna to oversee the appointments of three permanent media experts (collective salaries: £130,000).

But even that achieved something unique — a coalition of Conservatives, Liberal Democrats *and* Labour left-wingers, who forced Knowles to back down. The prospect of 3,000 workers being sacked while Dick's pal got the equivalent of the average annual salary every two weeks was just too sick even for Birmingham. Now Hanna has been told he can stay on — provided he takes a pay cut and finishes by the end of March.

But Hanna is not going without a tasty bonus. He has recruited one of the city's brightest young officers, the gorgeous, pouting Rita Webb, and is taking her away with him.

HINCKLEY

MORE bizarre facts emerge from the rural wasteland of Hinckley, Leicestershire, where a district auditor's report into the framing of Independent councillor Mike Handford has revealed council chief executive Alan Cleary as the culprit.

Handford, *Eye* readers will recall, was kicked off the health and leisure committee by councillors who had been convinced — by Cleary — that he had misused his public position to benefit his work as a leisure consultant.

(The councillor had been sent a questionnaire by a company, Berkeley Investments, purporting to be involved in refurbishing Chatham Dockyard and interested in employing Handford. The scam was rumbled after Handford found Berkeley's address coincided with that of private investigators the council had hired to follow him.)

It now appears Cleary himself was behind the campaign. It was he who arranged for the questionnaire to be sent, and who hired the private eyes — Kent-based Wallington-Reid Investigation Agency — after Handford raised tricky questions concerning the privatisation of the town's leisure centre.

According to the auditor's report, which cleared Handford of any conflict of interest, Cleary was "incorrect in thinking that his role should lead him to take action against an individual councillor. His duty is to prevent unlawful action by the council."

Hinckley charge-payers may now marvel at what Cleary told the district auditor:

- Cleary said he had referred several cases of alleged staff wrong-doing to the same private investigators. Wallington-Reid denied ever conducting inquiries into any other member of staff.
- Cleary hoodwinked the council treasurer over details of the vendetta against Handford and attempted to pass off payments to Wallington-Reid re Coun Handford as inquiries into ordinary council workers.

"It is not clear why Mr Cleary should have gone to these lengths," writes the DA. "They are not what the council is entitled to expect from the Principal Chief Officer."

MURKEYSIDE

NO ONE in Liverpool was remotely surprised by the city's pathetic showing in the schools' exam league table — 95th out of 108 — after a booklet explaining council education policy appeared riddled with grammatical and spelling mistakes.

In it concerned parents are told that the illiterate but right on local education authority (LEA) is "*sucessfully commited* to the *principal* of fighting *descrimination*".

Education director Frank "Potato" Cogley, whose salary almost matches that of a cabinet minister, blames typesetters for the mistakes, some of which are to be found in his introduction to the document. But his reaction has been so over the top he has even suggested deliberate sabotage was involved.

While doubts may exist about Cogley's performance in English, nobody can fault his grasp of home economics. When he took up his post in 1989, Cogley persuaded the council to give him a £200,000 interest-free loan to buy a house in the area. After all, why should Frank be expected, like anyone else who is relocating, to sell his existing Cambridgeshire home during a slump in the house market?

Although Liverpool is at the bottom of the exam table, it is certain of a top ten position in the new council tax stakes (band D — circa £690).

Taxpayers would therefore like Cogley to say whether or not he's paid the loan back yet, and if not, when they are likely to see their money again in the depleted council coffers.

Nor are parents amused at plans to axe 10 comprehensives in the city on the ground of financial expediency when staff and salaries in the central administration of the LEA are *increasing*. They are also put out to learn that the annual "incentives" bill to attract more "professionals" to work in council posts has been put at £114,000!

I-BSkyB

Our Lads in Croatia won't be bored during the moments over Christmas when they take a break from their duties.

The News of the World has helped send them a Sky satellite dish so they can watch movies.

News of the World

CONTRIBUTOR: Nick Cotter.

An occasional column for which readers are invited to submit Sky-plugs masquerading as news items in Murdoch papers. The usual £10 will be paid.

DOWN ON THE FARM

with 'Old Muckspreader'

DESPITE reluctance to fund useful things like hospitals and railways, the Treasury appears happy to sanction the spending of £70 million on an unwanted palace for mere ministry of agriculture scientists.

For decades the boffins have beavered away in labs around the home counties on useful topics like the life cycle of the mealy bug and the spread of blue-tongue disease in pigs. In recent years poor conditions at one lab site — Tolworth — provoked much muttering, but following a move to new and expensive buildings at Slough, staff quickly settled down to another lifetime or two of work on gut parasites in dairy heifers.

But they reckoned without the radical entrepreneurs in the ascendancy at Whitehall Place. The mandarins decided that solid, public-good science was too low-profile: the boffins needed flashy agency status and a prestige new lab.

Thus the treasury has given the go-ahead for a planned £70 million folly at Ryedale, near York. It is claimed that yet another relocation will save £100 million. But with the army of consultants brought in to advise on the move, plus the switch to agency status, no one is laying any bets.

As in the NHS, the change of status has been big business for the consultants and highly-paid admin staff. No one suggests it will lead to better science — but then no one in Whitehall Place ever thought to consult the scientists.

AVID NFU watchers following TV coverage of revolting French farmers will have been gobsmacked to see none other than director-general David Evans gingerly crossing a Strasbourg football stadium ringing with the oaths of 50,000 incensed peasants.

Unlike the CBI chief executive, the NFU's boss seldom makes TV appearances these days. This follows an unhappy experience nearly a decade ago when he faced Tory MP Sir Richard Body in a TV debate and tried to justify the amount of loot his members were lifting off taxpayers.

Unfortunately for the D-G, at the time of the French uprising the NFU's usual spokespeople — president David Naish and fellow officeholders — were all off with sore throats. So it was left to "Teflon Man" to volunteer for the snakepit.

Thanks to the din in the Strasbourg stadium no one could make out what he was saying, which is perhaps why he survived. Having spent 30 years with the ministry of overproduction the last thing he was going to do was criticise the Tory government over GATT.

The man recently awarded a CBE for his services to British agriculture was thus spared the embarrassment of having to outline audibly why he supports the deal.

SUBSIDY minister John Gummer has revealed the depth of his frequently-stated commitment to animal welfare by giving the go-ahead for the export of British lambs to Spanish slaughterhouses.

After a 2,000-mile-plus journey in the back of a truck, the wretched creatures can expect to meet the sort of fate usually encountered in Thomas Hardy novels.

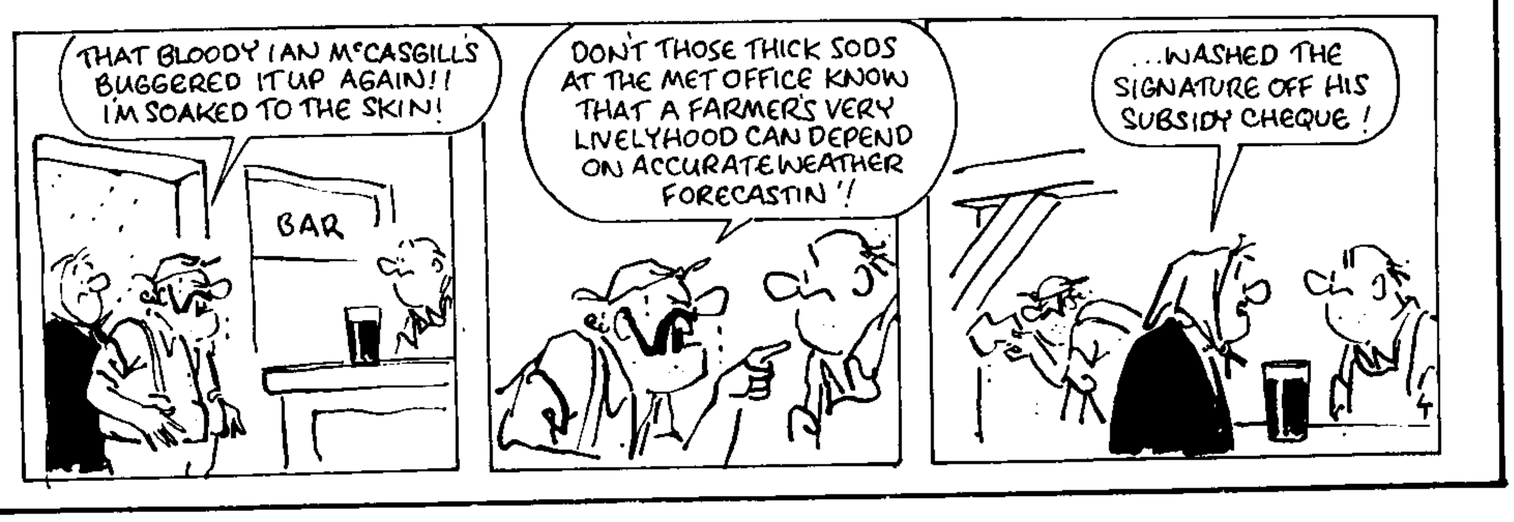
Why the Boy Wonder should have chosen the season of goodwill to announce the resumption of this obnoxious trade is hard to fathom. But it's possibly because he's recently aroused the ire of the boyos in the hills by cutting their subsidies on sheep that are now growing up thicker than the bracken.

The justification for trimming their hand-outs is that market returns have been much improved in recent months, thus boosting farm incomes. Naturally the farmers deny this and continue to cry penury.

The canny Gummer may calculate that by freeing lamb exports to Spain he'll give the market a further push and so get the angry boyos off his back. If so, it's the long-suffering lambs who'll pay the price of the minister's brownie point for saving treasury cash.

Old Macdonald

ALBERT


THAT BLOODY IAN MCCASGILL'S BUGGERED IT UP AGAIN!! I'M SOAKED TO THE SKIN!
BAR
DON'T THOSE THICK SODS AT THE MET OFFICE KNOW THAT A FARMER'S VERY LIVELYHOOD CAN DEPEND ON ACCURATE WEATHER FORECASTIN'!
...WASHED THE SIGNATURE OFF HIS SUBSIDY CHEQUE!

EYE TV

Missing

(ITV)

THIS hour-long documentary about people who had mysteriously disappeared began with the case of Alastair.

A chubby-faced man in his 40s, Alastair used to spend most evenings at the same place in the Gray's Inn Road. A few weeks ago, however, his appearances became more spasmodic until, finally, he walked out completely.

Then there was the strange story of Fiona, a perky girl with spiky hair. She used to be seen most mornings around White City, but she disappeared without trace several months ago. Those who loved her were distraught.

Well, that explains the presenters.

Alastair Stewart — who has just jumped ship from the stormy new-look *News At Ten* — and Fiona Foster — a regular on BBC *Breakfast News* until recently — turned up together on ITV to provide the usual explanation offered by television's missing persons. They had been given better jobs by a rival. From the new year, Alastair and Fiona will be hosting the early evening show for London News Network, the new journalism outfit serving LWT and the debutant Carlton. *Missing*, though, allowed the new team a dry run.

All one can say is that if this programme was in any way representative of what the London News Network service will be like, then it marks another step in the surrender to market forces of ITV journalism. "This is the first programme of its kind on British television," boasted Stewart as *Missing* began. He presumably meant the first domestic copy of an American format, which uses live transmission to round up runaways and missing people.

But he was wrong. It was merely one of the most extreme recent examples of its kind on British television. It was another stage in the process which has been the story of the year in commercial television journalism; a story which peaked with the new populist (yet, paradoxically, unpopular) *News At Ten* and the resignation of a star reporter from the new ITV breakfast show (due on 1 Jan), apparently because he was asked to take along on his Bosnian assignment Bucks Fizz or Sam Fox.

And now London's latest ITV news team gives an advance display of its wares in *Missing*. (Before an executive writes in to claim that this show had no formal connection with the news programmes, let us point out that Stewart and Foster's London Carlton/LWT evening bulletin was heavily trailed before and during *Missing*.) It was another intrusion in to British news of what Americans call "infotainment". The word means prurience posing as news, mawkishness pretending to be reporting, family crises broadcast as current affairs. The stories of the day as the stories of your life.

The first objection was to the cruel intrusiveness of the questioning, apparently calculated as a lever to the tears which are the real quarry of this sort of show. Interviewing the wife of a missing man, Stewart blurts, unbelievably: "How important to you is it to have Carl back...?" The wife admits moistly: "Carl and I love each other very much..." Stewart replies: "Thank you for sharing that with us"; the fact that he had even begun to *speak* American being something of a giveaway, one felt. All the links are written in the same creepy sob-ese: "Kevin's family still keep the Co-Op jacket he wore for his Saturday job... But they haven't seen him for six years!"

In other parts of the show though, mere exploitation of grief spilled over into actual irresponsibility. A lengthy hidden-camera segment of "exclusive film" follows the work of the juvenile protection unit of the Metropolitan police. These are plain-clothed officers who roam London stations warning under-age boys of the dangers they face. The work of this unit has been little covered in the media, and you might think that it could usefully stay this way. What a wonderful new cover story for platform paedophiles and pimps! "Hello, son, I'm from the juvenile protection unit of the Met. Perhaps you'd better come with me..."

In the same way, the elaborate banks of "trained" switchboard officers up Telecom Tower — taking calls of sightings from viewers — seemed a piece of witless heartlessness. What these grieving families did not need, you felt, was a shred to cling to that their son or husband was a chippy in Plaistow. Anyone who reads the British tabloids knows that their readers quite regularly spot Lord Lucan and Elvis Presley in unexpected places. Those sightings offend only reason. These risked offending ethics.

Poor Alastair. Poor Fiona. Think of them out there on those dangerous London streets this Christmas, facing the risks suffered by all who willingly walk out from warm and comfortable accommodation in the broadcast media. The danger from outwardly-respectable men who prey on the ambitious young in this dark world previously unknown to most viewers. "Come on, little boy, little girl, take your standards down. A bit more. It won't hurt. Promise you, it won't hurt." But it does, oh it does.

'Square Eyes'

"We apologise for the loss of sound and vision in your area. This is entirely due to the fact that you've come home drunk again and fallen asleep in front of the TV"

MEDIA NEWS

NOT MUCH goodwill was evident over the festive season at BBC Wales, where there have been several hundred redundancies in the two years since Geraint Talfan Davies took over as controller.

The installation of a giant Christmas tree at Broadcasting House in Cardiff was sub-contracted to a private company, Gardener Merchant. The tree was no sooner decorated, however, than a senior BBC executive decided it looked "too glitzy" and ordered three designers from the graphics department to strip it and start again. The task took the best part of a day.

"Everything at BBC Wales in 1992 has undergone change and improvement and that includes the Christmas decorations," a BBC spokesman in Cardiff explained to the *Eye*. "The look on Christmas trees now is more toned down than it used to be — less tinsel. It looks very tasteful."

Meanwhile the controller has circulated a deranged memo, headed "Atmosphere ('Buzz')", which proposes to "change the rather imposing feel of the BH [Broadcasting House] building and to improve significantly its impact particularly on visitors."

The memo continues: "Our idea is to exploit, for maximum PR impact, the horizontal and vertical 'corridor' (the lift and stairway at the front of BH) by locating adjacently to it high profile departments... We think it is important, within the Adjacency philosophy, to incorporate this Buzz consideration. We certainly feel that the selective use of Open Plan can also make an effective contribution to this factor."

What this gibberish seems to mean is that the corridor walls of all the offices in the building — including the first floor, which has just been refurbished at enormous expense — will be torn down. Not only will visitors be able to see the peasants at work, the "buzz" will indeed be deafening as tapes are edited on every desk. The cost will probably run into hundreds of thousands of pounds. Fortunately, BBC Wales can pay for it out of the money it has saved by sacking so many of its staff.

CORPORATION STREET W.12
An everyday story of Broadcasting Folk
"IT'S MY FIRST YEAR AS DG...
BBC TELEVISION CENTRE
AND I'VE VOWED THE BBC WILL PRODUCE ORIGINAL & NON-DERIVATIVE PROGRAMMES"
"SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO START WITH?"
BIAR
"A TV BREAKFAST SHOW WITH DAVID FROST!"
"Trebles & Antiques all round!"
Kim Pyne

DIE TV

THE young woman got her 15 minutes of fame, all thanks to the massed ranks of the world media. In Mogadishu she had to die to achieve it.

Twenty years old, she lay on the floor of a makeshift hut, her body collapsing from protein deficiency. All her relatives could do was wet her lips to ease the pain of dying.

The camera crew from NBC waited patiently all the time it took for her to die, inching forward rather discreetly, given the circumstances. They managed to elbow the grieving husband out of the way, so that as the woman opened her eyes for the final time, the last thing she saw on earth was a strange 3ft-long furry object, inches from her gasping mouth. It was a microphone. And the sound recordist was unapologetic. "My producer wants the sound of death."

There's no business like famine business. The postcards home (if there were any cards or any posts) from this seaside town probably say: "Come on in, the blood's lovely". The UNICEF spokesman is positively delirious with joy at the media attention he is getting. "Oh yes," he said, "Audrey [Hepburn] is a great friend of mine. Whenever I am in Geneva I can sleep on her sofa." Miss Hepburn was in Somalia as a "goodwill ambassador", just like Sophia Loren after her.

If they wanted to, the American TV networks could end the famine in Somalia all by themselves. Their personnel comfortably outnumber aid workers in the country. ABC alone has 15 camera crews and collectively the companies reckoned they were going to spend $15 million by Christmas alone. They have spent so freely that the rate of the dollar has halved, sending aid agencies' running costs soaring. The United Nations used to be criticised for its profligacy, spending as much as $5,000 a month for a house. The European Broadcasting Union, which sends the BBC and ITN pictures by satellite arrived late and has taken a lease of a house for $35,000 a month.

ABC has sent over its prime time anchor men, who do the whole show from Mogadishu, reading out the news about Bill Clinton's America from the beaches of Somalia. Everyone knew the marines wouldn't come ashore on a weekend, because that would have meant clashing with baseball games back home on US TV.

All the famous names are here: the big boys like CBS's Dan Rather, whose annual salary could provide food for the whole of Mogadishu. CBS has rented a truck full of gunmen, for $200 a day, whose job is to sit on their vehicle manning the machine gun and look fierce while Rather bravely delivers his pieces to camera in front of them, so the folks back home can see the risks he takes every time he gets out of his charter plane.

One of the first things the US marines did when they landed was set up a media briefing room at the devastated airport. Lt Col Peck, the spokesman, delivers his information, or misinformation, from a dais that is covered with green action-man camouflage material, as if he were speaking from bivouac in the heart of the jungle (the camouflage is all green and black making it very recognisable in the sandy deserts of Somalia).

Many TV crews wear bullet proof vests. Others moan about the living conditions and commute by charter every day from the comfort of Nairobi, two hours away. Some journalists rang the advance party of hacks to ask if the Mogadishu Hilton took American Express! When a convoy of the world's press roared off to the famine town of Baidoa with an American convoy, it succeeded in adding to the town's feeding problems, as many hacks arrived without enough food or water.

The photographer from *Life* magazine has been told by his employers to concentrate on "schmaltz" — lots of pix of weeping marines cradling starving children in their arms. For the first week this sort of thing was in short supply, almost non-existent as the marines just patrolled the streets of Mogadishu in armoured patrol cars and shot missiles at enemy trucks from helicopters. Both necessary, but not really schmaltzy. At this time of year, the children should be getting fat — and be pictured doing so. But do they know it's Christmas?

HACKWATCH No 36: Brian Hitchen

JUST as pets come to resemble their owners, so newspaper columnists come to resemble their opinions.

Paul Johnson is as furiously red-faced and wild-eyed as his prose; Lynda Lee-Potter's pen, like her make-up bag, is heavily loaded with mascara and scent; Bernard Levin, in those swot's glasses, is still the smarty-pants at the back of the class with his hand up ("Please, sir! I know the answer, sir!")

The *Daily Star* has taken this harmony of form and function to new heights. In the 1980s the paper carried a weekly column by one Ray Mills. His photograph — prognathous, burly, crop-headed — made him look like the sort of lout who can be found searching for a rumble outside Stamford Bridge football ground every other Saturday. "MILLS — The Angry Voice" was his slogan, and very angry he was too.

About four years ago the editor of the *Daily Star*, Brian "Mussolini" Hitchen, decided to take over the column himself. Hitchen is a fat, bald, aggressive cove whose head bears a startling resemblance to the tip of an erect penis. Glancing at the alarming photo above his column, you would perhaps expect a man who thought that most problems in the modern world could be solved with judicious doses of hanging and flogging. And you would be right.

Hitchen's contribution is billed on the front of the *Star* each Tuesday as "Britain's Hardest Hitting Column". With good reason: hitting, in one form or another, seems his favourite topic. His other recurring theme is the physical unattractiveness of certain celebrities. Has he, one wonders, ever looked in a mirror?

7 July: Attacks "gap-toothed novelist Jilly Cooper, whose hair sits on her head like an unshorn lamb".

21 July: Hitchen is incensed to hear of a British Rail guard who tried to make passengers in a smoking-car put out their cigarettes. "Pity the passengers didn't invite the guard to kindly leave the train — preferably when it was travelling at high speed. And after giving him a damn good horsewhipping, of course."

28 July: Hitchen relates with relish the tale of a woman who whacked a bag-snatcher with her walking-stick, breaking his leg. The "worthless swine" has been in hospital ever since. "Hasn't just hearing the story warmed the cockles of your heart?"

25 August: Returning from his summer hols in Ireland, Hitchen is shocked to see the pictures of Fergie and John Bryan. "Why wasn't Prince Andrew heading for London with a golf club in his hand to deliver the soundest thrashing John Bryan had ever had in his entire life?"

1 September: Time for Hitchen's succinct state-of-the-nation address: "Britain is in one hell of a mess." Norman Lamont, for good measure, is dismissed as "a spawny eyed, parrot-faced wassock".

22 September: The crime wave has reached Hitchen Acres. "I don't suppose they can read very well, so for the benefit of the vermin who robbed my home last week, I'll use short words... When one of you leapt 20ft from my bedroom window and landed on the flagstones outside, I'm truly sorry that you didn't break your spine... you are workshy and stupid... you have made me very angry... I never forgive and I never forget. One day your path and mine will cross... If you still don't understand how I feel, I'd be happy to meet you and spell it out personally."

29 September: Still traumatised by his burglary, Hitchen is "sick and tired" of "do-gooders" who "wring their hands" about crime. He wants the home secretary to take immediate action against "thugs", "monsters", "evil creatures", "dreadful swine" and other ne'er-do-wells.

20 October: Hitchen criticises the father of an 11-year-old boy who has been locked up for theft. "Perhaps he should have tried giving the kid a damned good hiding." Meanwhile, he has a novel suggestion for dealing with other criminals: "instead of animals, scientists should use child molesters and rapists for some of their medical research."

27 October: Ever sensitive to physical imperfection, Hitchen complains about the ugliness of Madonna — "about as fanciable as a three-day-old chicken sandwich with the butter going rancid and the bread turning up at the edges".

17 November: Back from yet another holiday, this time in America, Hitchen is furious to discover that the South African national anthem wasn't played before the Springboks' recent rugby match at Twickenham. "I'm sick of our being constantly expected to walk on eggs for fear of upsetting all sorts of rag-bag pressure groups and dubious political riff-raff," he rages. "And you can put the gangsters of the African National Congress straight at the top of that list... the gallant Springboks are a credit to South Africa. The same will never be said by decent people of the political hoodlums in the African National Congress."

24 November: Hitchen is excited by a new anti-rape device. "It's about time someone came up with something to knock rapists flat — apart from a kick where it hurts."

1 December: A modest proposal for solving the royal family's problems. "What, I wonder, does Prince Edward do for the £97,000 we pay him in the Civil List? Pity his father doesn't give him a crack across the head..."

8 December: Hitchen finds it "ridiculous" that, when suspected IRA terrorists are arrested, they are entitled to a proper trial. "Killing them would be a far more sensible solution." Meanwhile, he rejoices at the news that Myra Hindley has been beaten up in jail. "Me? I'd have hanged her years ago."

15 December: After all that hanging and quartering, Hitchen returns to a more elevated subject — his ceaseless quest for beauty. "I've never been able to understand what is so wonderful about Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Mona Lisa," he grumbles; she is "a fairly ugly woman". So, come to think of it, is the newly-wed Princess Royal, who has a "face that would have curdled a creamery".

Unlike, of course, the sweet face of Mr Brian Hitchen.

MEDIA NEWS

THOSE busy people at BSkyB will have to sell an awful lot of satellite dishes in the coming months after their bluff was called by one of Europe's largest cable TV operators.

Executives at Cablelink, which provided Sky with around 300,000 viewing households in Dublin and more rural parts of Ireland, were surprised to be told that they would have to collect around £10 a year from each of their customers, in return for them being allowed to continue watching Sky One and Sky News. The extra fee would be in addition to the payments already made for Sky's Movies and Sports channels.

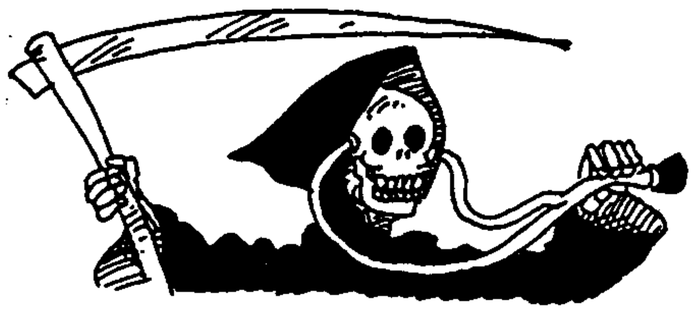
Having given the matter careful consideration, Cablelink simply pulled the plug. How many of its subscribers will mourn the loss of "favourites" like Selina Scott and the sociopathic Aussie soap *E Street* remains to be seen. The joint Thames/BBC channel UK (G)old is now hoping to inherit the airtime lost by Sky.

Doubtless advertisers who booked time on the Bskyb channels will be receiving a rebate of part of their fees, the loss of up to a million potential viewers in the week immediately before Christmas being less than helpful from a sales point of view.

FOLLOWING the computer blunder that mislaid £58 million of BBC money (see last *Eye*) comes news of another computer cock-up at the corporation, smaller but no less stupid.

The BBC gramophone library, the largest in Britain and the holder of a copy of every record and CD released, has survived perfectly happily for umpteen years with a simple card-index system. Now the cards have all been thrown away in favour of a £1 million computerised replacement.

The new system works perfectly — except for one tiny flaw: whoever programmed it forgot to include the *titles* of any records: only the titles of individual tracks are listed. Any member of staff wishing to withdraw a certain record has to look at it and note down one of the tracks before it can be removed from the stacks. But obviously they can hardly look at it *until* it has been removed from the stacks. Brilliant!



DOING THE ROUNDS

HUNDREDS of surgeons across Britain will spend new year twiddling their thumbs because their hospitals have run out of money to treat patients. With a third of the financial year to go, would those intending to become ill kindly do so after April?

Happily no such hardships have beset hospital administrators, whose wage bill this year is likely to reach £300 million. A further £50 million has so far been very usefully spent on preparing hospitals for trust applications — many of which have been unsuccessful.

● **MEDWAY health authority** in **Kent** spent more than £200,000 on a year-long crusade to gain trust status. It failed because no one told it that community and hospital services are not allowed to opt out en masse. MHA will now have to find another £200,000 and almost as many managers to fund the next round of trust applications.

Luckily MHA has four prisons within its boundaries and treats many inmates as lucrative "extra-contractual referrals". Before an inmate is allowed routine surgical treatment, however, MHA asks for an assurance that his or her "health authority of origin" will pay the bill. If the authority refuses, as is often the case with those serving long sentences, the operation is cancelled.

● THE impecuniosity of **North Worcestershire health authority (NWHA)** has not been helped by the £200,000 it has squandered on the unfair dismissal of two staff members. Consultant haematologist Helen Zeitlin has been reinstated after a costly tribunal following her sacking by manager John Parkes for whistle-blowing at **Redditch's Alexandra hospital** two years ago (*Eye* 793). The Alex has now closed three wards and two operating theatres.

District nursing adviser Wendy Hanson-Nortley was awarded substantial damages after being shown the door by the manager of **Bromsgrove and Redditch hospital**, Graham Coomber. In both cases, NWHA refused to settle out of court. Mr Coomber, now NWHA chief executive, claims Mrs Hanson-Nortley was made redundant "to save money".

● CHARLES MARSHALL, novice chief executive of **London's UCH-Middlesex shadow trust** (*Eye* 808) has further endeared himself to staff by forcing two long serving and highly respected directors of nursing to compete for one job in the new trust.

Middlesex's Toni Whyman and UCH's Sue Porter spent two months in gruesome competition until Marshall announced that neither had the skill to become director of nursing at UCH-M and both would have to go. But Mr Marshall was forced to bow to union pressure and recant his decision to close ward 2/1 (surgical) at UCH.

● **NORTH West Herts acute unit** general manager Bronwen Davis recently dismissed her projected £400,000 deficit as "chickenfeed". However, auditors have now uncovered a £3 million shortfall. The usual "rationalisation measures" of non-managerial redundancies and ward closures are under way and emergencies are being diverted to **London** or **Bedfordshire**.

● NON-EXECUTIVE directors of the new **Gloucester Royal Hospital trust** have at least one thing in common — none of them lives in **Gloucester**. Of the 12 directors, five come from a remote rural crescent stretching from **North Nibley** to **Frocester**, and one is a director of Rank Xerox UK, Sir Derek Hornby. Lady Hornby, who lives in **Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire**, does, however, have strong connections with Gloucester: her mother's cousin once played the organ in Gloucester cathedral.

● MANAGERS at **Forest Healthcare Trust** in **Essex** have put a brave face on their decision to sack 70 hospital employees after "failing to match income against expenditure". While unions held a crisis meeting, the trust laid on al fresco drinks for 30 civic dignitaries to celebrate the proposed extension of **Whipps Cross hospital** in **Leytonstone**. Catering trollies were tactfully commandeered from the hospital, forcing many staff to miss lunch.

● THE **Royal Oldham Hospital** has come up with a clever way to enforce the patient's charter, which decrees that all patients are seen within half an hour of their appointments. Faced with a cut in the number of doctors at the diabetic clinic, the charter target has only been achieved by turfing patients back to their GPs en masse and slashing the number eligible to attend the clinic. One lady, who'd attended for 20 years, was told of her discharge without explanation in an undated, unsigned letter. So much for patients' rights.

● THE **Royal Sussex County hospital** in **Brighton** shelled out more than £10,000 on two murals and eight mediocre ceramics for its outpatients' department before realising a local hospital arts team would have done the work for free.

● **SOUTH East Kent health authority**, faced with a £245,000 overspend at seven hospitals, has taken the brave step of asking consultants for their views. And **Lewisham health authority** is desperately trying to sever its links with the **Guy's Trust Flagship** to avoid facing the Tomlinson axe. This bid for independence is diverting thousands of pounds away from patient care leaving **Lewisham hospital** to rely on charity to fund a CAT scanner. The appeal's mascot is a cat called Louis. *Geddit*?

● THE SOLUTION of managers at **London's Hillingdon Hospital** to bed shortages was to open the gynaecology ward... to men. The scheme ran for a month before complaints about mixed bathing forced a U-turn.

● AMBULANCE chiefs in **Reading** are celebrating the opening of their new base at the **Battle Hospital** by competing with local taxis. "We are exploring the possibility of carrying people other than patients and staff," announced transport manager David Turner. "We are also considering carrying other people's goods."

"He's doing a ten-year stretch for fraud – only been inside two days!"

● INQUIRIES into the sacking of whistle-blowing biochemist Dr Chris Chapman after his exposure of fraud at **Leeds General Infirmary** (*Eyes passim*) have been hindered by the "loss" of a file belonging to one of the auditors. The fraud was not officially discovered until long after Dr Chapman made his allegations and the missing file is thought to reveal why Stuart Ingham, chief executive of the **Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust**, dismisses the idea of a "trustgate" scandal. "I don't know what's happened to the file. There's nothing mysterious about it going missing." And monkeys will fly out of MD's butt...

'MD'

● M.D. was under heavy medication when he (or she) wrote in *Eye* 806 of the queues at St Bartholomew's hospital, Rochester. The accident department there of course closed many years ago. What M.D. *meant* to say was that "people waiting for treatment" spend long periods unattended waiting or falling off trolleys. Which they do...

Bankers

MORE NEWS of how banks, via their receiver henchmen, can grab whatever is going when a company becomes insolvent, leaving other legitimate creditors in the lurch.

In *Eye* 806 we wrote about the plight Cradley Casting, a company which was unable to reclaim its goods (still unpaid for, and despite having a "retention of title" [ROT] clause in its sales contract) from an insolvent company since a bank, via its receiver, had recouped its losses first — stalling all ROT claims and hiding behind the threat of vast legal fees to scare off the supplier.

In many cases firms such as Cradley Casting may face the further aggravation of seeing receivers confiscate their property from the insolvent company — and then sell it off as quickly and cheaply as possible, flooding the market with the suppliers' own goods at half price!

This system has been criticised over the years in no fewer than three reports — but still no action has ever been taken. Under the British system, suppliers recover on average only 15 percent of what they are owed. Surely goods delivered on credit, as these are, should have the same legal protection as bank loans? The various reports certainly think so and have recommended the introduction of the uniform commercial code, as used in America.

Under the system a firm registers the goods it supplies on a central computer, making it easy for any creditor or would-be creditor to see who owns what in which company. The supplier then takes priority in any liquidation if his goods are deemed to be necessary to the running of the insolvent company: a firm making widgets must be supplied with iron in order to produce its goods; and should it go into liquidation the supplier of the iron can take precedence over a mere bank. What a revolutionary thought!

A MR BAIRD writes from Australia, where he runs a commercial fishing company, attaching a debit note from Lloyds bank for £35 plus VAT — a charge for providing a standard one-sentence letter to his auditors giving the balance of an account.

As Mr Baird says of this iniquitous and cheeky charge: "Not even an arthritic snail could take longer than 10 minutes to undertake the whole operation of checking the balance, completing the form and mailing it. Even allowing for airmail charges, £41.31 seems exorbitant."

But, as he says, he has since heard that his bank turns off its fax machine at night, and so nothing surprises him any more.

NOOKS and CORNERS

SO LITTLE has been built this year it is very difficult to award the Hugh Casson Medal.

Perhaps the recession is the bright side of an altogether ghastly year: Jocelyn Stevens, David Mellor, the burning of Windsor Castle, the destruction of the CoE (meaning, in the end, the destruction of lots of nice churches), the death of Sir John Summerson, the gratuitous ruination of *The Architects' Journal*, the establishment of the Arts Council's architecture department by My Lord Palumbo... Need I go on?

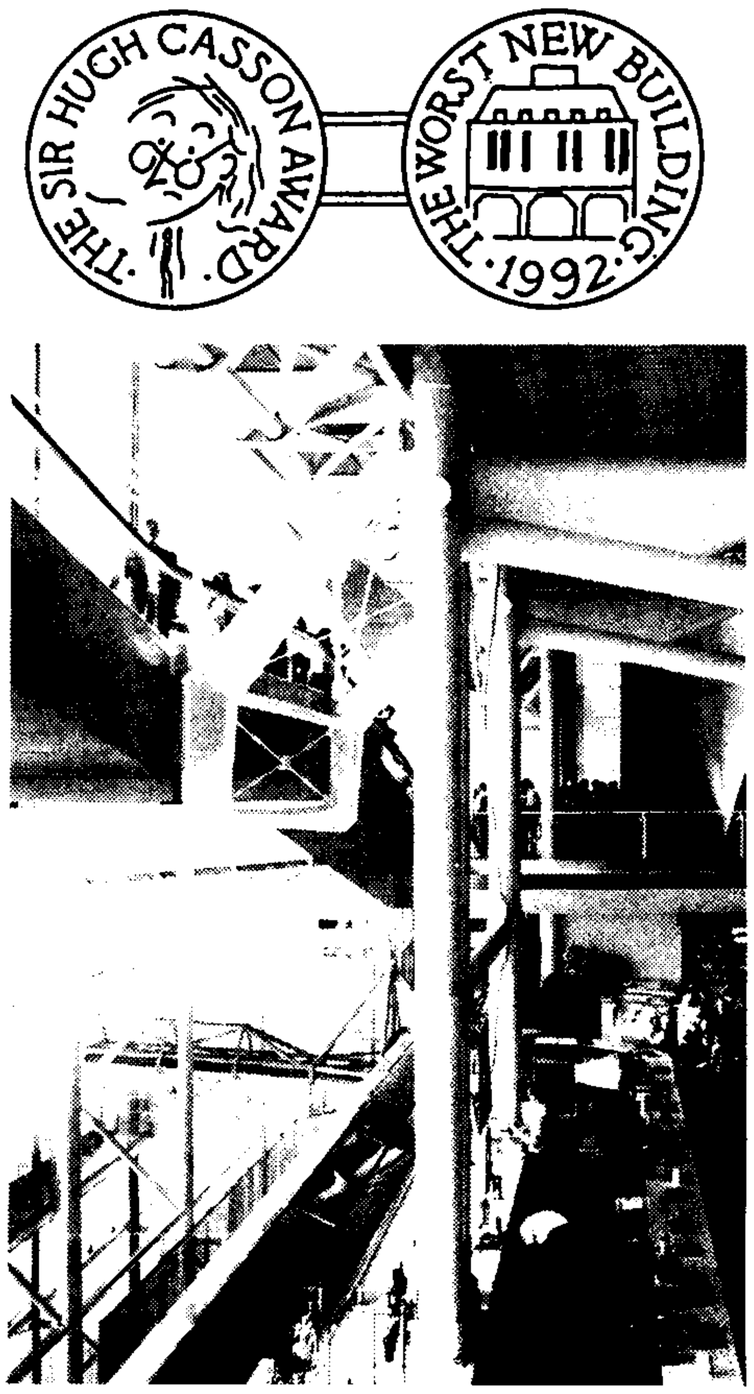
But what deserves Britain's most prestigious architectural prize? Nothing completed this year is as pretentious or puerile as last year's winner, Venturi's *Sainsbury wing*. There is plenty of mediocrity, but nothing as worthless as anything "designed" by Maxwell Hutchinson.

Some readers have suggested Alban Gate or the new MI5 HQ at Vauxhall, both by Terry Farrell; but both, although much too big, are not that bad. Another proposes the ridiculous new gate at Kew Gardens by Trevor Dannatt, a gratuitous essay in pointless "deconstructionism"; but the fact that it has been extravagantly praised by Mr Stephen Gardiner is not sufficient reason, really, for me to damn it.

In fact I should like to give the medal to a masterpiece by Sir Norman Foster, especially now that he has attained such stratospheric status as to make him beyond rational criticism, acclaimed by such unlikely people as Mr Marcus Binney and Mr John Harris. But both his bogusly functional Stanstead Aerodrome and his arid work at the Royal Academy were completed in 1991.

So what to do? Fortunately there *is* a building which has been both finished — and demolished — in this *annus horribilis*, MCMXCII. It is a building which proudly represented Britain at her Best — which makes me want to emigrate. I refer, of course, to the United Kingdom Pavilion at the Expo '92 in Seville.

In its wisdom, the client acting for *us*, the department of trade and industry, decided Britain should be represented by a fashionable High Tech structure designed by Mr "Nick" Grimshaw, an architect of supermarkets with designer spectacles whose horizons cannot extend beyond the range of Meccano and who finds the use of "wet" materials, like brick, as abhorrent as it is alien. Yes, the Crystal Palace was also "high tech" in its own way, being cleverly prefabricated, but at least that was a coherent design.



The British Pavilion at Seville is proof, if proof were needed, that fashionable architects (not all of them yet knighted) who are expert with pipes and wires, bolts and gaskets, have failed to acquire that true mastery of form and function which is the glory of architecture.

The great, captivating gimmick at Seville was a wall of water: a glass entrance front down which streams of water cascaded. The problem, however, which Mr Grimshaw had to address — like "Sir" Richard Rogers at Lloyd's — was how to enter the building. In both cases this proved rather difficult. Grimshaw's solution was to run a catwalk through the glass wall — off centre, naturally — but because he fortunately realised that visitors would get drenched by the pouring water, he remembered to provide a little glass entrance canopy to keep them dry.

Such is architecture. As for the other three sides, they were enhanced by curved forms inspired by yachts and disfigured by tiresome but necessary fire escapes. In fact the British Pavilion was as much an essay in wicked "facadism" as anything traditional — but at least with a neo-Georgian facade the entrance problem is more easily and convincingly resolved.

Inside was an impressive space, enlivened with lots of catwalks and banks of video screens. But what was it for? Perhaps here Mr Grimshaw must not be blamed, for the DTI invited the Conran Design Group to fit out the interior. The result was that foreign visitors were confronted by pathetic displays of what Britain Has to Offer: food and jumpers from M&S and vulgar pottery nick-nacks from Wedgwood. At least we still manufacture something, I suppose.

Perhaps the pavilion was, indeed, wonderfully symbolic of Britain after 13 years of Tory rule: a showy, pretentious exterior with nothing behind it; a country with more video recorders per head of population than anywhere else in the world and which has lost its purpose, its sense of direction and its soul.

Certainly Mr Grimshaw now deserves his knighthood: if Norman and ardent socialist Richard can get their handles, why not others of the nuts and bolts school? Grimshaw's Seville masterpiece certainly deserves the Sir Hugh Casson Medal for 1992, and it has the added bonus of being both abroad and ephemeral — except that some are calling for its reerection in Britain. Yes, the Crystal Palace was rebuilt on Sydenham Hill; but what could Grimshaw's waterfall become? Another supermarket? A new headquarters for Lord Palumbo? The Thatcher Memorial Library? Ideas on a postcard, please.

JUDGEMENT in the Macmillan Award for the worst local authority of 1992 has had to be reserved because the field is so strong.

'Piloti'

Sally Deedes

TO CELEBRATE his wedding anniversary, Robert Beckman decided to take his wife to New York on Concorde for a three-day holiday. At the time the only company offering such a deal was Superlative Travel in London. But the Beckmans' trip was far from superlative.

Mr Beckman sent a cheque for the deposit on his September trip at the beginning of August. He received no confirmation and so telephoned two weeks later. Yes, the trip was confirmed and no they couldn't help with theatre bookings. A day later he was asked to pay the balance.

His group, consisting of 80 travellers, arrived in New York and waited nearly an hour for the bus that was to give them a tour of the city before depositing them at their hotel at 10.30am. Their rooms were not ready; and although the hotel manager had told Superlative of this, the company had not thought to tell the by now weary travellers. They stood around in the vestibule for an hour before a less than superlative representative arrived offering no apology.

The next morning there was no water in the hotel. Unable to bathe, clean their teeth or flush the loo, 80 smelly holidaymakers then descended on to the streets of New York to make their own way to the departure bay for a boat trip around the islands. No representative was there to greet them, but by now they were used to this treatment.

Back in London, Mr Beckman complained to Superlative in writing about the lack of service and the substandard hotel (before departure the manager agreed that the hotel was below par and expressed surprise that the company had advertised it as first class. It had recently been bought by Jolly hotels who were due to close it at the end of the year for refurbishment).

Superlative responded the next day to Mr Beckman's complaint. The firm apologised for its courier's lateness and then non arrival for the boat trip. He was not a representative, it was explained, but a courier, whatever that means. Superlative also apologised for the lack of water but offered no refund.

Mr Beckman tried to claim for the water problem through his insurance company, but this was refused. He was advised "that an approach should be made to the tour operator". A copy sent to Superlative brought no comment, so Mr Breckman made a formal complaint to the puffed up Association of British Travel Agents, who presumably would help. Instead, ABTA sent him papers to forward his complaint on to arbitration at a cost to himself of £31! He was told that any action ABTA might take against Superlative Travel would be an internal matter and confidential.

Mr Beckman sent his £31 to the arbitration scheme, and his papers were sent on to Superlative for response. Under the rules there is no personal representation and the letters and papers are the sole evidence for the complaint. The party that loses must pay the costs of the other.

Mr Beckman was pleasantly surprised to receive a "without prejudice" letter from Superlative, who in an effort to save time and expense were prepared to offer £250. He accepted in full and final settlement and ABTA returned his £31 cheque.

As Mr Beckman says, the disgruntled traveller has to be very determined to make a complaint. The travel company plays it to the hilt — and ABTA is worse than useless.

WATER NEWS

THE STREETS of Yorkshire have been teeming with people celebrating Yorkshire Water's record profits of £72 million for the six months up to September.

They were also overjoyed to hear that Sir Gordon Jones, the £143,000-a-year chairman, had magnanimously announced that the privatised company had voluntarily "restricted" itself to a modest 7.1 percent price increase, more than double the rate of inflation.

The record profits will help Yorkshire Water pay an £8,000 fine and £4,000 costs imposed by Scarborough magistrates after the company admitted failing to comply with an abatement notice to curb foul smells from a sewage outfall.

Letters

Private Eye

God arrest ye merry gentlemen

Sir,

As an occasional reader of PRIVATE EYE *(but never again!) I protest as strongly as possible at the obscene and diabolically blasphemous cover picture on this week's issue. The "artist" (and a very indifferent one at that!) must be* VERY *sick, if not positively possessed!!*

You and he/she are both very brave, aren't you; in this country the blasphemy law is almost non-existent and it is very, VERY *easy to commit a crime against Almighty God — I wonder if you would be so brave in an* ISLAMIC *country??*

I will only repeat the words of our Saviour (and yours!) when he died on the cross: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do".

MOYRA SHELDON,

London W8.

Blooper

Sir,

Back to the Facts

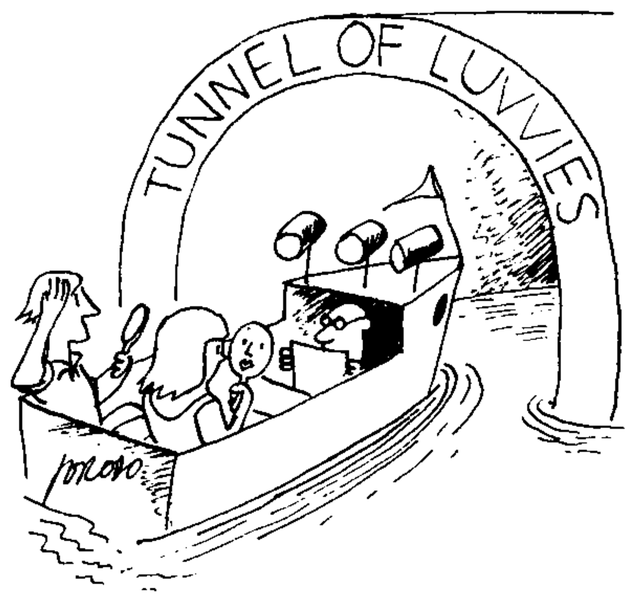
Some you win, a lot you lose. Your suggestion (20 November) that I preferred to consult a specialist at the BUPA Glen Hospital rather than use my own trust's services is far from the truth. In fact I suffered a back injury in a car crash and was treated by the superb neurosurgery department at Frenchay. I had no treatment at the Glen; I was sent there for an independent medical report by lawyers who required a report for use in litigation. Such reports have to be paid for privately; they are not available on the NHS.

No doubt said lawyers are now licking their lips at the prospect of a juicy libel action, but I can think of better uses for the money — provided you print this letter promptly and in full.

Yours with confidence in public service,
ANN LLOYD,

Chief Executive, Frenchay Healthcare NHS Trust, Bristol.

LUVVIES



"Benny is probably the greatest pro I've ever worked with; he's ostensibly 13, but in actual fact he's been here for several incarnations. He has a sort of European profundity and I am actually deeply in love with him."

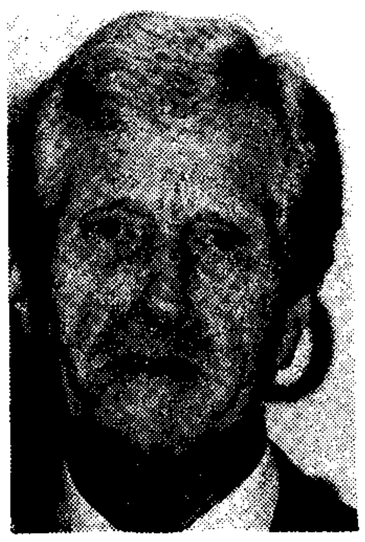
MAUREEN LIPMAN
(on child actor Benny Grant)
Times

Submitted by Linda White.

An occasional column featuring gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Lookalike

Walters



Madge

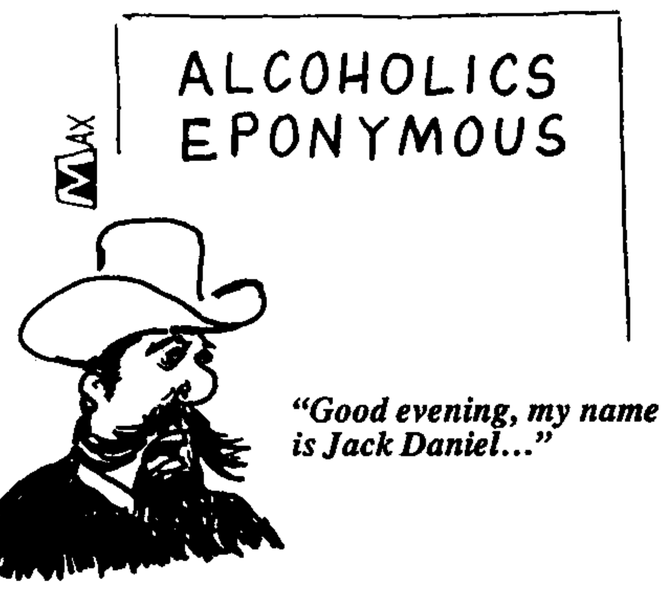
Sir,

I wonder if any of your readers have noticed the remarkable resemblance between Sir Alan Walters, economic guru and adviser to Lady Thatcher, and Ms Madge Allsopp, bridesmaid and companion to Dame Edna Everage.

I suppose there is some genetic link in the distant past.

Yours sincerely,
BRIAN T. POTTER,

Edinburgh.



"Good evening, my name is Jack Daniel..."

Frost warning

Sir,

*While grateful for the mention of us in your esteemed organ (*EYE *809) I should point out that although convicted fraudster Gregory Lauder-Frost wrote to us warning of the perils of further coverage of his sorry tale his letter was given short shrift.*

After breaking the story in January 1992 reporter Georgina Wroe and deputy editor Grant Jones pursued the case to the very end, much to the chagrin of Frauder-Lost and his apologist A.V.R. Smith who also wrote to us.

Apart from refusing to be bullied we gave his case the comprehensive coverage it deserved.

Yours faithfully,
PAUL MOSLEY,

Editor, Hammersmith Chronicle and Fulham Chronicle.

Framed

Sir,

Window Wars

As an avid reader of Piloti's scribblings over the years, I never imagined I would rush to his defence in your letter pages. But Jeff Curtis's misguided bigotry (Letters, 20 November) got the better of me.

The ordinary citizen is having a profound effect on his surroundings through inappropriate home "improvements" that do not require planning permission. Over four million historic windows and doors are at risk. These features provide the vernacular detailing that gives every old town and village its unique sense of place. But local planning authorities tell me that the consumer response to marketing hype is seriously threatening to emasculate our heritage.

But never mind the bureaucratic overview — how would Mr Curtis like it if his property was devalued by a neighbour's artistic licence in producing a "Mess of the Month"? He should also get his facts right.

Traditional windows are extremely durable (my sashes are having their 165th birthday this year) but plastic versions have not been fully tested — 25 years minimum yes, but few manufacturers offer more than a 10-year guarantee. In cost/benefit analysis too, old windows score — being cheaper to maintain than replace, for even sci-fi materials need overhauling.

As to energy conservation, give me a break! Where is the economic sense in scrapping viable building components and replacing them wholesale with fossil fuel consuming products of unknown durability whose manufacture produces greenhouse gas? As the majority of heat lost from windows comes from the gaps between the opening lights and frames — it is perfectly possible to add draught proofing to existing windows and save up to £40 pa for under 20-30 percent of the cost of double glazing.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN FIDLER,

Director, Framing Opinions Campaign, English Heritage, London W1.

Sub standard

Sir,

*I write to complain about the article by Square Eyes (*EYE *809) comparing* A TOUCH OF FROST *with* BETWEEN THE LINES.

Since I have watched every episode, so far, of the David Jason detective series I feel fully qualified to comment and I have to say that the article was well written, well researched, interesting and accurate. Is this what we may expect from the EYE *in future? If so, I must consider whether or not I am subscriptually challenged.*

Yours faithfully,
J. RICHARD TODD,

Chester.

Lookalike

Elton

Dawson

Sir,

I was wondering, perchance, if any of your readers have spotted the striking resemblance between that well-known comedian Les Dawson and the mega-star Elton John. I feel sure they must be related in some way.

Yours etc.
C.T. ELLIS,

London SE8.

Rev counting

Sir,

Re the Almighty's mistake in zapping Windsor Castle instead of St Nicholas's Church, Durham (Nooks and Corners, 4 December): I don't know whether to be pleased or displeased at your drawing his attention to this. If he were to get it right next time, of course, the people who actually care for St Nicholas's might (for all you know) use the insurance money to build in its place an even more luxurious coffee lounge, rather than a pseudo-Victorian shrine for Anglo-Catholic worship, which incidentally it never was.

Yours faithfully,
REV MICHAEL WILCOCK,

Vicar, St Nicholas Church, Durham.

I-SPY *Maori sculpture*

Submitted by Andrei Eldon-Edington. *£10 paid for similar submissions.* *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Luncheon vouching

Sir,

Not that I mind, not (I'm sure) that Sue Douglas minds, but just for the record: I don't recall being offered John Walsh's job on the SUNDAY TIMES. *I had lunch with someone, who wasn't, as far as I remember, called Sue Douglas, but who seemed anxious to give the job to* SOMEBODY. *We parted on the amicable and, as I saw it, mutual understanding that I wasn't the one.*

Yours etc.,
ALAN JENKINS,

TLS, London EC1.

Angry Barchard

Sir,

After two years of regular denunciations as a national arch-enemy by Asil Nadir's friends in the Turkish press world, it was a real delight (Greek Delight, perhaps?) to read Slicker in the EYE *telling the world that I had in fact been writing a slavishly favourable authorised biography of the man based on extensive access to him. In fact Nadir and his chief henchmen refused throughout to see me or answer any questions. But why blame Nadir for refusing to be interviewed? Slicker himself proved just as shy after being tracked down at an hour when his home answering machine was not delivering its quaint message to callers: "You have reached the Asil Nadir Appreciation Society. Send money, lots and lots of it..." Nice to find a journalist who invests so many of his thinking moments on his subject matter.*

Perish the thought that Slicker's uncharacteristic reticence, not to mention his eagerness to slaughter every book about Nadir which appears on the market, might have anything to do with a possible rival tome on Nadir. No doubt if such a work ever slips past the attentions of the senior partner at Sue, Grabbit and Runne, readers will be able to make their minds up for themselves which of us has managed to keep their sense of perspective intact while covering the Nadir story.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID BARCHARD,

London WC1.

Desert island risks

Sir,

Your astute informant, who spotted that Norman Tebbit couldn't tell his Kipling from his Spring Rice on his DESERT ISLAND DISCS *debut, missed the best part.*

As correspondents to Radio Four's TALKBACK *programme were eager to point out, the Sage of Chingford's gaffe was snipped out by a helpful BBC prior to the Friday morning repeat of the programme.*

All in all pretty good of them, given that all Norman ever seemed to do in the past was hand out lashings of GBH of the earhole to the long suffering Beeb.

Yours sincerely,
CHRIS PURSER,

Thirsk, N Yorks.

Puff

Sir,

Good cheer and Christmas doubles all round in your bumper Christmas issue was spoilt only by your acceptance of a bill-board ad for the murderous drug peddlers in the tobacco industry. Whilst I accept that revenue from any source is welcome and necessary for you to continue your good work of exposition I hope that this money doesn't distract you when it's their turn... ie publishing this letter.

Yours faithfully,
BARBARA FORD-HAMMOND,

Newton Valence, Hants.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Mansell is now on his 62nd lap. After this: laps 63, 64 and 65."
MURRAY WALKER, BBC
(Brett Arends)

"It's a case of putting all our eggs into the next ninety minutes."
PHIL NEAL
(I. Winnicombe)

Dave Lee Travis: *Who played the title role in Educating Rita?*
Contestant: *Is that a man or a woman, Dave?*
Radio 1
(Ian R. Davies)

"If in winning the game we only finish with a draw we would be fine."
JACK CHARLTON, RTE
(Gerry Cushnahan)

"Sunderland are suffering from deja vu — a case of 'What will be, will be'."
LENNIE LAWRENCE, ITV
(Mike Brown)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN

YOU BEAST. LAST YEAR YOU SAID YOUR NEW YEARS RESOLUTION..
.. WOULD BE ALWAYS TO TELL THE TRUTH.
I KNOW. I WAS SUCH A TERRIBLE LIAR THEN.

Letter from Brasilia

from Our Own Correspondent

CAUGHT with his hand in the till, President Collor has been removed from power. He's already dead politically and has no hope of an impartial hearing. After a bogus trial, the senate will rubber-stamp his impeachment.

It should be any day now, and the politicians are in a tizzy over who will be fingered next. "Enough is enough", they whisper in the corridors of power: the lid must be closed on this Pandora's box of corruption. The problem is that some federal police and even some politicians have caught the bug "to make Brazil clean". Despite sabotage attempts, corruption probes continue in various areas of public life.

The moralising torrent has already swept away one presidential hopeful — Orestes Quercia, president of the largest political party. Born into a poor family, he has been a politician all his life yet has managed to acquire "bits and bobs", as he puts it, worth, according to one estimate last month, US$52 million. Although he has packed his cronies on to the inquiry into one dubious deal he did while Sao Paulo state governor, embarrassing evidence keeps emerging.

Working closely with his henchman, Joe Portuguese, Quercia has made some good investments. Back in 1974 he paid US$30,000 for a plot of land near Campinas, a town in the interior of Sao Paulo state. Four years later he sold it for US$900,000. The land had shot up in value after the municipal government decided in 1975 to build a new road through it. Quercia was mayor of Campinas at the time.

Multinationals are also alarmed by the moralising. Mercedes-Benz, one of the most involved, decided to come clean to the federal police in the hope that most of the blame for its irregular financial transactions could be placed on Collor's henchman, the notorious P.C. Farias, a man so hated he dare not step outside his fortress home in Maceio.

The problem is that Mercedes can't get its story right. The company's judicial director, Mario Vargas, said P.C. approached the company in September 1990 saying he would like to become a dealer in Mercedes cars. But, says Vargas, what P.C. really did was to threaten "to force us out of the vehicle market in Brazil unless we contributed to Collor's party funds". What could a poor multinational do but hand over US$1.1 million?

This doesn't tally with Euclides Montana, the communications manager. In his version, P.C. approached Mercedes with his proposal six months later, in March 1991. This explained why the former managing director of Mercedes worldwide, Werner Lechner, lunched with P.C. at his home before meeting President Collor in the afternoon. Even at the time, this version was not plausible: why would the big cheese put himself out for such a lowly mouse as a Brazilian car dealer?

It emerged that our secret service infiltrated a "security guard" into the lunch who overheard reference to a large sum to be paid to P.C., which, it seems, was part of Mercedes' successful attempt to have banking regulations changed to allow it to increase its share of our big bus market.

Our new president, Itmar Franco, declared there would be no *corruptos* in his government. But in his haste to cobble together a broad alliance, he appointed men with, er, colourful pasts. Lazaro Barabosa, new agriculture minister, was involved in the big "grain tourism" scandal in 1989 when he was a top official in the ministry. Silo contracts were awarded to inexperienced private companies while 40 per cent of the government's silos were empty. Thousands of tons of rice rotted in a country with a serious malnutrition problem.

Fernando Coutinho Jorge, new at environment, is a former federal deputy who supported timber companies trying to increase mahogany export quotas. He's an old chum of the governor of Amazonas who, as part of his electoral campaign, gave out chain saws to help supporters clear the rainforest.

And Alexandre Costa, interior minister, was responsible in an earlier government for the notoriously corrupt North-South railway (*Continued on Page 94*)

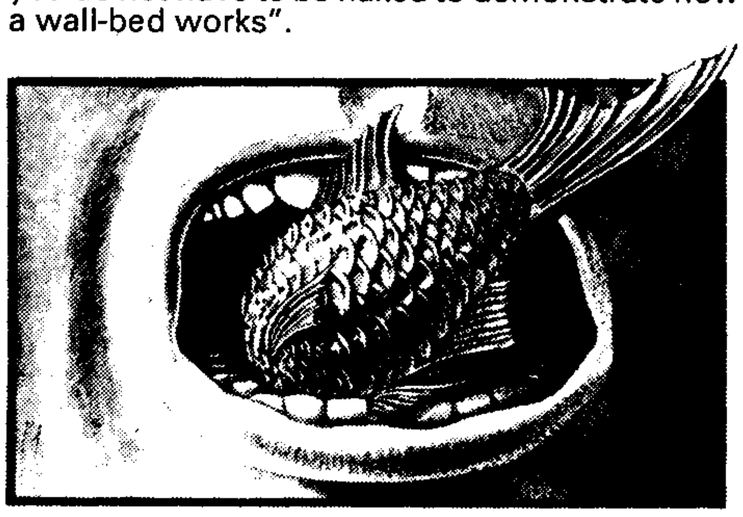
TRUE STORIES

CHRISTOPHER LOGUE

ASKED why he had gone through twenty sets of red lights at over 60mph, Mr Dean Waters of Exeter replied that he was on his way to Devon to start a new life.

CHIEF Inspector Koki Toguta of the East New Britain Security Police has issued a statement confirming that Mr Heremain Rumea, the Minister of Finance, is resting in the Security Services' care. "After an intensive campaign among the villages of Pomio," the Inspector said, "a large crowd from the Rabual district demanded to see the £K50 million that the Minister proposed to spend on the North District's social services if he was re-elected, and that he said he had with him in two large suitcases. When the cases were opened the crowd saw they contained nothing but the bark of su-su trees and two white envelopes each with '£K25 MILLION' written on them. At which point we took the Minister into our care."

ALTHOUGH he maintained that the accident occurred while he was showing his neighbour, Mrs Hilde Kraus, how the bed worked, Judge Werner Stott told Mr Johann Weder: "When your wife came into the room and heard muffled cries coming from behind the panel of your wall-bed she pressed the release button and, as the bed came down, you and Mrs Kraus were bounced naked onto the floor at her feet. She will be allowed her divorce because you do not have to be naked to demonstrate how a wall-bed works".



BERT KITCHEN

SPEAKING of his companion, Mr Brian Toddle, Mr T.L. Jones told the coroner: "Brian had caught his first fish and was about to basket it when he got a strong bite on his other line. Needing both hands to land his second catch, he put the first fish between his teeth as a temporary measure. But while he was reeling in it managed to get down his throat and he was dead by the time he reached hospital".

CROSS-QUESTIONED by Mr Mana Mpheta, Ms Sophia Phwti admitted that Mr and Mrs Ntonyo were not her parents: "In fact," she said, "I had never seen them before they got on the bus for the market. But when we discovered that we had money troubles in common I agreed that they could pretend to be my mother and father and that they would sell me to the man in the market who offered most, and when I had been given my share, I would run away. Mr Zomba liked the look of me and Mrs Ntonyo said he had offered T8,000 (£25), but before the money changed hands I heard Mr Zomba say: 'Here is the T2,000' (£6.25) and I felt insulted by the reduction, so I called the market police".

ON HER annual report Mrs Clarence Shupe of the Carnelian Bay Recreation Committee said: "It takes imagination and talent to bring off a successful show in North Tahoe, but the 5-man 5-woman zip-a-dee-do-da un-zip-a-dee-do-da down-to-the-buff Night and Day routine woweeed the Carnelian in-crowd with their bold bare bosoms and bottoms and passed our 10 Star Would You Like A Replay test with bonus colours".

INFORMATION: Western Evening News 30.11.92; Post-Courier 16.11.92; Esslinger Zeitung 19.11.92; Glasgow Evening Times 11.11.92; Malawi Times 25.11.92; North Tahoe Truckee Week 25.11.92.
MONITORS: P. Christie, D.A. Jackson, A. Bluhm, Alan Fergus, Brian J. Saword, Joe Walker.

BOOKS OF THE YEAR

True Blue Angel: The Life Of Marlena Thatcher by her daughter Carola

To millions of fans all over the world Marlena Thatcher could do no wrong. With her beautiful legs and her deep, sexy voice, Marlena was worshipped by men and women alike. But now her daughter Carola reveals her to have been aggressive, unsympathetic and unpleasant, dominating her daughter and making life hell for everyone in the country. *(We knew all that already — Ed.)*

The Life of Howard Carter-Fuck by Niles Kington

Few figures of our time have aroused such controversy as the archaeologist Howard Carter-Fuck.

The world thrilled to the story of how Carter-Fuck stumbled upon the fabulous treasure of Tutanlibel — a huge hoard of gold, free for the taking.

But there was a price to pay. Carter-Fuck came under a terrible curse and instead of dying lived on and on, getting richer all the time.

They Flew To Bruges

At last, the book of the film, including all the scripts from the dozen or so versions and hundreds of exciting stills. Compiled by Sheridan Morley from an original idea by Christopher Booker. *(That's enough books — Ed.)*

His resignation comes at a difficult time for Mr Major, after the departure of David Mellor from the Government. Mr Garel-Jones was closer to Douglas Hurd, the Foreign Secretary, but Mr Major warmly praised him and said in his letter: "Norman joins me in sending you and Catali our love and good wishes for the future."

The Independent

"Holmes... I'm 'Honey'!"

Sunday Times

Ski Resort Update
with Alastair Scott-Free

Val d'Hennessy — slushy, wet, mushy, piste-poor.

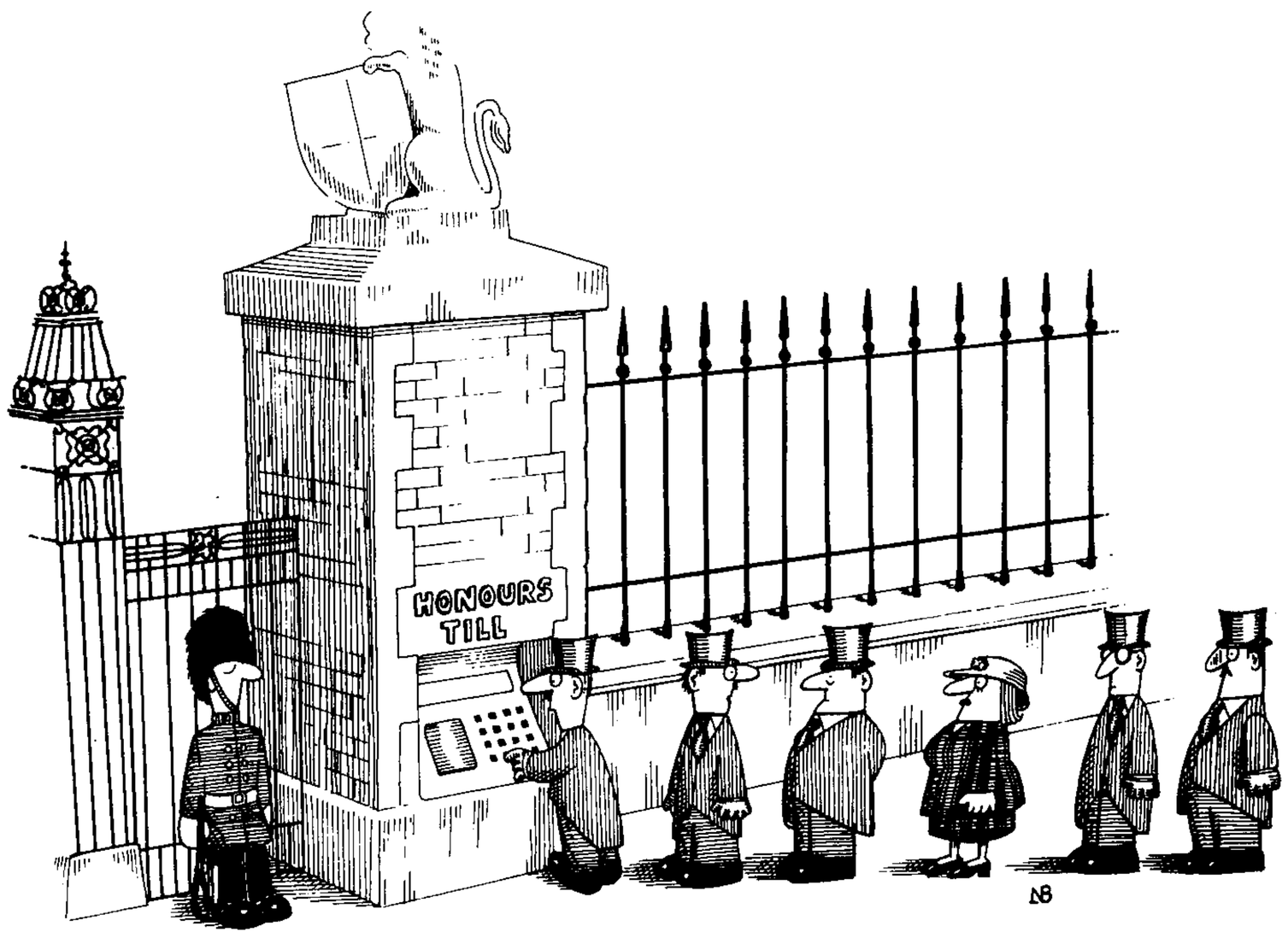
Meribelmooney — *see above*

Tignes (Brown)— Hard, icy, tough, overpriced .

Mont Gomery — cold, treacherous, dangerous, "a real bastard"

Aspel — smooth, sophisticated, full of American celebrities.

(That's enough resorts — Ed)



RECOVERY STARTS

LAMONTGATE — NEW TWIST

by Our Thresher Staff **John Onanoitsthechancellor**

THE MAN at the centre of the so-called "Lamontgate" scandal was revealed last night to be a liar.

Mr Norman Lamont changed his story about the economy and claimed his earlier version had been "a joke".

"I'm very sorry," he lied. "I had no idea the press would latch on to it and it would cause such embarrassment to everyone."

Mr Lamont's manager, a Mr J. Major, after an internal investigation, decided that nothing at all should be done about anything.

He said: "It is clear that this man was lying. But that is what he is paid for."

Treasury receipts showed that the date of the recovery was wrong, the figures were made up, and Mr Lamont could not possibly have led a recovery at the time suggested because he had been too busy buying champagne and fags in an off-licence in Paddington.

Answers to Christmas Quiz

1. a) Nigel Kennedy b) Bart Simpson c) Mates.

2. i) If the man left the off license at 7.15, he could not possibly have reached 11 Downing Street in the time stated.

3. Andrew Morton, Andrew Windsor, Andrew Neill and Julie Andrews.

4. A.S. Byatt. All the others have moustaches.

5. a) Donald Trelford b) One day a week c) No one knows.

6. Camilla Parker-Bowles, Belinda Harley, Candida Lycett-Green, John Wells.

7. West Indies 379-1 (declared).

8. Peter Carter-Ruck. £497,000 million.

9. The eclipse of the Moon.

10. Desert Orchid, Lyn Barber and Jason Donovan. None of the others own balloons.

Kenya Election Results in full

(Not to be released until after the election)

Nairobi South

No change.

Arap Moi (Permanent Party of Government) 375,403.

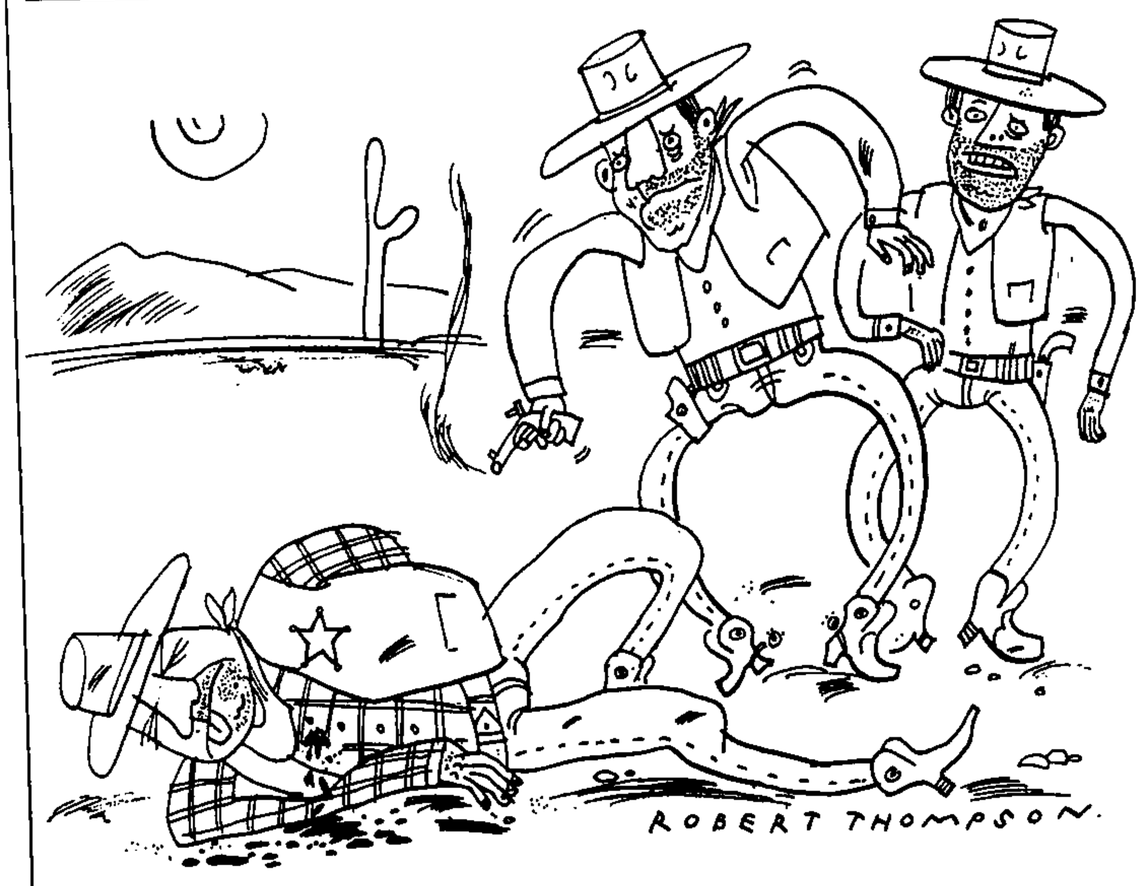
Mr O'Ginga O'Bingo (Opposition Party for the Overthrow of Arap Moi): sadly eaten by lions.

Paddington South

J. Onanugu (Thresher's): Re-count.

N. Lamont (Conservative): £47.88p.

(That's enough results, Ed.)



"This isn't going to look very good on your CV"

SECURITY ALERT FORCES CHANGE OF VENUE FOR GNOME AWARDS CEREMONY

by Our Bores Staff **Andrew Borton, James Whitabore, Hugh Montgomery Massive-Bore, Penny Jubor, Anthony Holdonthisstuffsboring, Lady Celia Cambore and Lord St John of Boresly**

THOUSANDS of guests heading for London's prestigious Canary Wharf development for the annual Gnome Bore of the Year awards were forced last night to abandon their journey owing to an IOU security alert issued by Britain's top banks, using the coded message: "Pay up or we close you down."

The venue for the ceremony was hurriedly switched to the remains of St George's Hall at Windsor Castle, where a stage was rapidly improvised out of charred timbers and unsold copies of Lord Lawson's memoirs, *I Was Right And She Was Wrong*.

As guests descended from a fleet of Eurofighters and entered the dripping ruins of Britain's premier Heritage Centre, they were greeted by Lord Jocelyn Stevens and issued with blue UN-style "hard hats", now mandatory under a new EC Health & Safety Directive.

P's and Q's

MR Emanuel Strobes then took the stage to introduce the host for the evening, ITN's new-look **Trevor Barbados**, whom he described as the "sole anchor" for the evening's awards.

Mr Barbados then swivelled round on his chair and proceeded to interview himself on a huge screen.

BARBADOS: Trevor, how's it going tonight?

BARBADOS: Well, Trevor, things have got off to a pretty boring start. Many of the guests are already asleep. Back to you, Trevor.

BARBADOS: Thank you, Trevor. And, after the break, I'll be announcing the first award.

There then followed a series of the Most Boring TV Commercials of the Year, including Lord Dudley Moore's "Can't Find the Chicken", Mr Leo McKern's "Lloyd's Bank Is Awfully Good", Lord William Connolly's "Why I Prefer Joke-Free Humour", and the award-winning Gold Bore coffee couple seen practising safe sex in the privacy of their own TV studio.

Tension was draining away to vanishing point when Mr Barbados brought on **Mr Michael Palin** to present the Christopher Columbus Grand Bore of the Year Award for 1992.

There was a delay as Mr Palin was flown in from the top of Mount Everest, where he had been filming his new series, *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*. When he arrived, Mr Palin announced that for the first time in history the supreme award was to be given twice in successive years to the same recipient.

There were no audible gasps as Lord Palindrome read out the nominees: "The GATT Talks; the Earth Summit in Rio; the Barcelona Olympic Games; Council Tax house banding; and Ms Madonna's photo-essay, *Sex*.

"But the clear winner, for the second year running," he concluded, "is the **Maastricht Treaty on European Union.**"

Unsigned copies of the historic accord were then forced on protesting guests by a team of specially trained Government Whips, as **M. Jacques Delors** came forward to accept the Award on behalf of the Community (with opt-outs for Denmark and the UK). M. Delors proceeded to treat guests to a four-hour lecture on the meaning of subsidiarity.

Premier League

MR Barbados then handed over to himself to introduce **Lord Richard Attenbore**, who was to announce the winner of the coveted Newcomer of the Year Award.

Lord Attenbore spoke movingly about his new film, *Dickie*, a five-hour autobiographical study of a British cinematic genius who became the most famous man in the world, several times breaking down into tears as he did so.

"Darlings, luvvies and angels," he began. "It is my supreme honour to read out this piece of paper. It says **'John Smith'** on it. Who's he? Isn't that what we always used to write in the hotel registers when we were being naughty?"

This humorous sally was greeted by special canned laughter from the soundtrack of the *'Allo 'Allo* comedy show.

A small man in glasses and a blue suit then shuffled forward to accept his award, and gave guests a short display of his legendary parliamentary wit. "Why doesn't the Right Honourable Member do something

1992 BORE OF THE YEAR AWARDS

about unemployment?" he droned.

As guests tried to keep themselves awake by consuming large quantities of Ecstasy, Mr Smith said that it was now his very great privilege and honour to announce the name of the Woman Bore of the Year. He was, he said, delighted to see that the winner was also a member of his party's new-look Front Bench.

As members of the Grimethorpe Colliery Band collected their redundancy notices and had to sell off their instruments to pay their mortgages *(Shurely 'played a medley of melodies from the West End hit Moby Dick'? Ed)*, Lord Smith introduced to guests his deputy leader, **Mrs Margaret Beckett**. As she climbed onto the stage there were cries of "It's a fix!" from supporters of other contenders for the Female Bore of the Year Award such as Mrs Virginia Bottomley, Miss Sue Cameron, Miss Sara Dunant, Miss Jeannette Winterson and the late Baroness Thatcher.

There followed an ugly incident when a Mr Charles Moore became hysterical and violent as he demanded the return of Mrs Thatcher from the dead to save Britain.

Sir Nicholas Faldo

DURING a pause in the proceedings, guests watched videos of highlights from *Eldorado*, after which Lord Barbados introduced **Miss Victoria Glendinning**, the celebrated Booker Prize judge, to announce the winner of the Team Bore of the Year award.

Miss Glendinning said it had been a particularly strong year for group-bore, and all the candidates were equally tedious in their own way. But she and her fellow judges (Lady Eve Bollard and the new editor of *The Times*, Lord Stothard) had decided to share first prize equally between a) the "ruling troika of the BBC" — Sir Marmalade Gussett, Mr John Birk, and the late Mr Michael Checkbook — b) the Cabinet and c) the General Synod.

Sir Marmalade Muppet, 179, came up first to receive a lifesize replica-style "Sky Dish" and a personal calculator to enable him, as Ms Glendinning wittily put it, to "find those missing millions".

This enormously amusing impromptu joke, read by Miss Glendinning from the autocue, was greeted by more canned laughter from *Dame Edna Everage's Neighbourhood Watch* Show.

Mr John Major then stepped forward to be given a special gold-plated soapbox on behalf of what the judges had agreed was "not only the most boring but the most incompetent Cabinet in history".

A Mr Lamont meanwhile surprised guests by distributing bottles of Mr Onanuga's Finest Krug-Style Fizz and cartons of Treasury Cut cigarettes to those members of the audience who were still awake.

Finally a **Mr Gummer** came up on stage to say he could not collect the award on behalf of the General Synod since he had resigned from the Church of England over a very important point of principle — i.e. whether Cabinet Ministers should allow private companies to pay for the refurbishment of their ponds *(Shurely 'women vicars'? Ed)*.

Ben Pimlott

THE mood changed dramatically to one of intense somnolence as Heritage Minister Mr Peter Brooke stepped into the spotlight to give his celebrated rendering of *Oh My Darling Clement Attlee*. He was followed by Mr David Mellor, a television personality, dressed in footballing kit, who held forth to the audience for some hours on the opera, the future of broadcasting and what he had read in that morning's paper.

He then introduced another TV personality and chat show "wannabe", **Lord Kinnock**, who drew out the winning numbers in the new National Lottery from a giant condom bearing the slogan COME TO EURO-DISNEY BEFORE IT CLOSES DOWN.

The first prize — the British Rail network — was won by a **Mr Richard Branson**. The second prize — St Bartholomew's Hospital — went to the Abu Dhabi Investment Development Company (prop. Mr Mark Thatcher). Third prize — Stonehenge — went to Mr Peter de Savary, Chairman of Druid-o-rama Theme Parks plc.

After this delightful diversion, the Baron Trevor of Barbados shuffled the papers on his desk before introducing the next category, Most Boring Couple of the Year. The candidates for this new award then paraded in front of the comatose audience in swimsuits.

First on was Mr John Bryant, the distinguished financial adviser, with his client, the Princess Fergiana of Yorkiebar. Next came Mr Michael Jagger and his long-time companion, Ms Jerry Tall, followed by Mr William Wyperson and what remains of his former teenage partner, Ms Mandy Smith.

To the stirring sound of a traditional ANC death-song (*Free Nelson Mandela From His Wife*), South Africa's most glamorous couple "agreed to differ", as Ms Mandela lovingly placed a blazing rubber tyre around her husband's neck.

There was much uncanned laughter as the lugubrious figure of the world's funniest man, Mr Woodswell Pargs, served a series of writs on his former live-out lover, Ms Mafia Arrow.

Lastly the audience rose to their feet to give a reverential snore to Britain's No. 1 Fairy-tale Couple, **Lord Charles of Wales** and **Princess Squidgy of Relate**.

All partners then retired to consult their lawyers, while Archbishop Carey intoned that there were never any winners in this sort of situation, and that it was the children he felt sorry for.

Observer Colour Magazine

AMR David Thomas, formerly of the magazine *Punch*, now attempted to entertain guests with readings recalling the great days of his sadly defunct journal. The highlight was a description by Mr Roy Hattersley of how he had taken a tram through Sheffield in 1932 to purchase a dripping butty from Old Mother Parky's Ferret-U-Like Tykeaway.

This was a suitable cue for the arrival of Britain's most celebrated playwright, **Allan Bennett**, winner of The Most Plays On Television Award 1992, who introduced a seven-hour compilation from his Yorkshire tetralogy, *Last Of The Summer Ferrets*.

Selina Scott

A GROUP of distinguished pollsters then circulated among the audience, asking the

More Bores ☞

1992 BORE OF THE YEAR AWARDS

handful who were still awake what would be their voting intention in the next election. After consulting his swingometer device, Mr Peter Snow excitably announced that the exit poll showed an astonishing 703-seat majority for the Lib Dems, under their leader Mr Ross Perot.

Mr Peter Kellner then came on to predict that there would be no more awards that evening, and the Earl of Barbados immediately announced that Mr Kellner had just won The Worst Prediction Of The Year award.

This was greeted with insane fury by the only member of the audience still conscious, Mr Nigel Pratt-Dumpster of the *Daily Mail*, who waved copies of his 10 December column headed CHARLES AND DI NEVER MORE IN LOVE.

Lord Palumbo

THERE was then a roar of engines and smell of high-octane fuel as **Mr Nigel Mansell** demonstrated his extraordinary prowess as the World's Most Boring Sportsman by driving round the Castle courtyard 200 times at 150 mph in a car sponsored by Matrix Churchill and Olympia & Yorke.

As Mr Mansell ran over a number of chanting *Mirror* "dissidents" under the outspoken leadership of the Hon Paul Spart, His Grace the Duke of Barbados announced the last award of the evening — for the Most Boring Scandal Of 1992 Involving The Word "Gate". He read out a list that included Iraqgate, Paddygate, Mellorgate, Threshergate, Dianagate, Camillagate, Billingsgate, and Cowandgate. But, before he had reached the end of the list, a Mr Carter Ruck rushed on to the stage warning that any further mention of anything at all would lead to huge fees being paid to himself out of Treasury funds.

Kevin Costner

AT THIS point a section of the burned-out ceiling gave way, and the inveterate lawyer was rendered an unfortunate victim of Dresden-style bombing by the following items as they cascaded from the charred beams, *viz*: one statue of Lord Harris (slightly daubed); hundreds of unsold copies of Lord Tebbit's autobiography *I Was A Teenage Werewolf*; thousands of canvases by the late Lord Francis Bacon on the theme of The Screaming Queen; millions of the illegible new £20 notes; sundry unpleasant items of dress designed by Ms Vivienne Westwood OBE; several hundred million miscellaneous American magazines now edited by people who used to edit other magazines; one tattered herringbone overcoat, formerly the property of Mr J (Hondootedly) Cole; and over 10 billion tubs of Häagen-Dazs Crack-Cocaine-Flavoured DoubleWhammy Ice-Cream.

As guests vainly dialled 999 to call the new Computerised Emergency Ambulance Service, a lone figure bungee-jumped into the room from the smoke-stained battlements, accompanied by her faithful borgis *(Shurely 'borzois'? W.F.D., winner of Most Boring Editor Award, 1973-1987)*. It was none other than Her Majesty, who announced that, so far as she was concerned, it had been an "annus borabilis" and that she was resigning at once in order to spend more time with what remained of her family. She then handed over the Royal Dogs to Mr Barbados, and appointed him President-For-Life of the new Euro-Province of Britain.

The Lives of the Saints No. 94

THE BLESSED SELWYN OF GUMMER

LITTLE is known about St Selwyn, who lived in the Dark Ages. However, no one was a greater champion of the Church of England than St Selwyn and he frequently defended it against heresy. In 1992 AD the Synod voted to ordain women and St Selwyn decided to leave the Church altogether rather than tolerate this wickedness.

As a sign that he had made the right decision in the eyes of God, this holy man was blessed with what became known as the Miracle of the Pond.

This pond had hitherto been nothing more than a small dirty pool, full of rubbish and old tins, at the bottom of Selwyn's garden.

But one day it was suddenly transformed into a beautiful, clean, home-enhancing water complex with golden fish and exotic water lilies. And folk came from all Christendom to see for themselves the Holy Pond of Gummer.

The wicked murmured among themselves that it was a huge bribe from an agricultural corporation. But the faithful knew only too well that it was a symbol of divine grace operating through St Selwyn.

© *Readers Digest*

LUZ
BY CUTTER PERKINS & RGJ
10
THE WORKSHY BASTAADS! THE COUNTRY'S IN THE SHITE AN' THEY CAN AFFORD TA SIT ABOOT!
THE FREE MAIL
BRITAIN'S 12 DAY HOLS
AYE, PET! SOME PEOPLE DIVVENT KNAA THE MEANIN' O'HARD WORK!
I AM 92
HOY US ANUTHA CRATE A BOLLINGER, PET!
TALKIN' A WORKSHY BASTAADS, IT'S FRUITCAKE AN' SENSITIVE!
HE'S HAD ONE O' HIS IDEAS!
WE NEED SOME GOOD PR AN' TA ECONOMISE!
SO WHY DIVVENT WE AAL GET BIKES LIKE TH' EURO-ROYALS?
WOR BOFFA'S ONLY JUST GOT RID O' HIS BIKE!
I LIKE A BIT O' EXERCISE SITTIN' IN TH' SADDLE, ME! FNARR FNARR!

The Secret Diary of John Major aged 47¾

Sunday

I am in America, or it may be Canada. It is certainly somewhere, in my judgement, that has very tall buildings. It was a very long flight to get here from Heathrow, much further than Edinburgh where I had my great triumph, and even more important than Edinburgh because I am meeting the President of the United States.

On the plane I sat next to M. Delors, who even though he is French is not as clever as he thinks. He had clearly got on the wrong plane for France and I pointed this out to him in his own language.

"Ou est la maison de M. Delors?" I said.

He gave me a strange look and shouted "Merde", which must be a town, perhaps near Paris.

We did not say much after this as he was clearly embarrassed at having caught a plane going the wrong way. The film was about a robot who takes over the world. I enjoyed it very much.

Monday

Mr Bush greeted me at the White House, which was full of removal men taking away the furniture. He did not seem to be his usual cheerful self.

"I gather", I said, "you will not be in charge for much longer."

"They're saying the same thing about you," he replied, giving me a funny look. Plainly he had been misinformed by his advisers. Perhaps this is why he lost the election.

Later on we went to Mr Bush's ranch for what Mr O'Donnell called "a top-level photo opportunity". It was just like in the photographs from *Hello!* magazine, which Norman reads in bed when I am trying to do my boxes, rustling the pages noisily and in no small measure disturbing my concentration on important issues like the British Rail Customers Charter. Anyway, there was a barbecue and a pool and even a golf course on the roof, where Mr Bush spent all day at a meeting.

During the evening an unfortunate incident occurred when a photograph of myself and Mr Bush was handed out to the press. Except it was not me! Oh, no. It was Sgt Huckleberry Flintstone of the President's Security Staff. Mr Bush was very apologetic, saying it was easy to see how the mistake had occurred. "You are both nondescript men with glasses," he explained.

Tuesday

Mr Clinton, who is going to be the next President of the United States, was too busy to see me. "He is washing his hair," his secretary told me, "and then he has a saxophone lesson all afternoon. Would you like to book a telephone call for later on?"

When I rang at the appointed time a man called Hilary answered who had a very high-pitched voice.

"So you're the slimy Limey who tried to dish the dirt on Bill, are you?"

"I think there must be a mistake," I said.

"Yes," said the voice. "You are one hell of a mistake, Bud," and then the phone went dead.

British Telecom may have its faults but Mr Waldegrave has assured me that crossed lines such as this are now almost unknown in Britain. This is another triumph for my Charter, oh yes!

Wednesday

I am back in England for another important engagement — my friend Jeffrey Archer's Christmas Party. You have to be very famous to be invited, and in the lift on the way up to the penthouse my wife Norman pointed out all the celebrities to me — there was David Frost, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Mr Hurd. I recognised him at once.

"Hello, Douglas," I said. "Fancy meeting you here."

"I have just seen your picture in the paper with Mr Bush," he said. Everyone laughed heartily, especially Mrs Thatcher, who had obviously gatecrashed the party as she is not famous anymore.

Over the traditional shepherd's pie and glass of champagne, which is very nice, Jeffrey told me that he had a new idea for his book about Godfrey Bowman, the famous writer. There is a war in the Balkans which no one knows how to solve. The Foreign Secretary, a Mr Dougal Hard, is an old man who offers the Prime Minister James Colonel very bad advice. Everything goes wrong. But then Godfrey Bowman flies out on his own on a mercy mission and parachutes into Sarajevo. Singlehandedly, he brings the warring factions to the peace table. The Queen, who is disillusioned with her son and heir Prince Brian, abdicates and offers the crown to King Godfrey.

I must say, it sounded a very exciting story and the character of Mr Hard, a toffee-nosed Old Etonian with grey hair, sounded very lifelike.

Mr Lamont arrived late and brought a plastic carrier bag full of chinking bottles.

"Oh! Christmas presents!" said our host, eyeing the bag. "Are you going to give me one?"

"No," said Norma. "I'm going to give someone else one."

Everybody laughed and nudged each other but I could not see the joke. As Norma left, Jeffrey shouted out: "Give her one from me!", which was rather silly since he had not given Mr Lamont a present to be passed on.

Christmas Eve

I had no time to do any Christmas shopping, as Mr O'Donnell said I had to go to a place called Bosnia (which is not on my Daily Telegraph wall map). This was not possible, so I went to Yugoslavia instead. It was certainly a White Christmas there and I had to put on a woolly hat and gloves. I met a lot of soldiers in a wood and they showed me their tanks, which are very big and will certainly show Saddam Hussein who is boss!

On the plane back Mr O'Donnell said that my visit had done wonders for morale. "Yes!" I said. "The troops looked very happy to see me."

"Not their morale," he said with a groan. "The Conservative Party's."

Poor Mr O'Donnell. He seemed to think that there had been party workers in Yugoslavia over Christmas. Perhaps he had had too many of the little bottles of cherry brandy that the stewardess handed out. I personally preferred the Christmas pudding wrapped in clingfilm, which was considerably tasty in my judgement. Oh yes.

Christmas Day

The Lamonts invited themselves to lunch, and Norma brought a bottle of red wine which he said came from Threshers.

"Oh," I said. "That is not a region that is recommended in my new wine book."

Everyone laughed at Norma, whom I had clearly embarrassed by my display of knowledge. (Thanks to Norman, who gave me "Wine for Beginners" by Keith Floyd in my stocking!)

Still, Norma became very jolly as the day went on and even pulled a cracker with me.

"Listen to this joke," he said. "The economy is about to recover."

I did not understand this, but Norma winked at my wife and said: "I love a little cracker, don't you?"

New Year's Eve

I have decided what my New Year Resolution is to be. It is to be either more resolute or more decisive. I am not sure which. Tomorrow I will go to Ryman's to get a new diary. Or will it be Smith's?

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Folies Bergères

So. Farewell
Then

The Folies
Bergères.

Famous French
Cabaret.

Where Toulouse
Lautrec once
Sketched and
Drank the night
Away.

Or it may
Have been
The Moulin
Rouge.

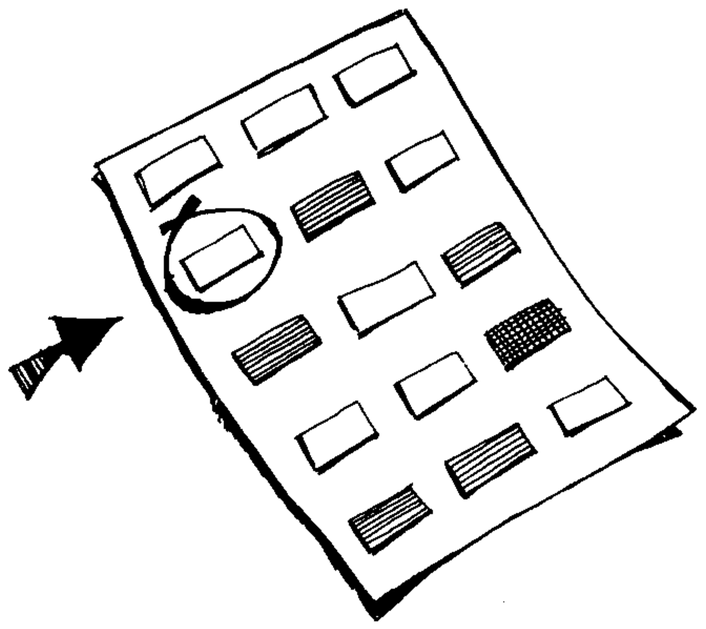
I cannot be
Sure.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

"They have been suggesting that for some time. It's all rubbish. It's fiction." His comments followed claims that the Prince has been secretly Mrs Parker-Bowles for more than a decade, and as often as once a week.

● Camilla Parker-Bowles

Evening Gazette



dawes

PROCOL HARUM'S
WHITER SHADE OF PALE
PRECISELY DEFINED ON A PAINT CHART
(PROVENANCE : B+Q)

NEW PITS SHOCK — HESELTINE TO CLOSE MOUTH

by Our Political Staff **Peter Snow White**

IN AN extraordinary ruling, the High Court today decided that the President of the Board of Trade must "shut up" immediately.

"It is no longer economic", said Justice Donne, "to have this awful pit producing garbage that no one wants. It must close at once."

Mr Heseltine's "Dash for Gas", in which he talked hot air for hours, was declared illegal and he was ordered to stop churning out inflammatory nonsense forthwith.

A campaign to re-open Heseltine's mouth has not begun and there are no marches on Westminster nor petitions to No. 10 Downing Street.

"Anything that comes out of Heseltine", said Justice Donne, "is overpriced, overvalued and over the hill *(shurely 'overrated'? Ed).*"

The wind section of the Heseltine Brass Band (own trumpets) will be disbanded immediately.

DIANA TO CHOOSE ST CAKE'S?

by Our Education Staff
G.C.S.E. Fail

THERE IS a strong possibility that the future heir to the throne is to be educated at the little-known public school St Cake's rather than the more traditional Eton.

A spokesman for the Princess Regent said yesterday that St Cake's had many advantages over other schools of its kind. "In particular," he said, "security would not pose a problem because no one knows where it is."

Rip-Off

St Cake's (motto: Who Pays Wins A Place) was founded in 1442 by King Henry VII and is the oldest school in the world, according to its brochure compiled by leading London PR firm Hogleby, Bowtie & Nogleby.

The new Headmaster, appointed only last week, is a former accountant, Mr Reginald Checkland, a cousin of the BBC Director-General, who is himself an Old Cakesian.

Other famous Old Boys of the school include Jeremy Paxman, Robin Leigh Pemberton and composer Johnny Dankworth.

Very High Fees

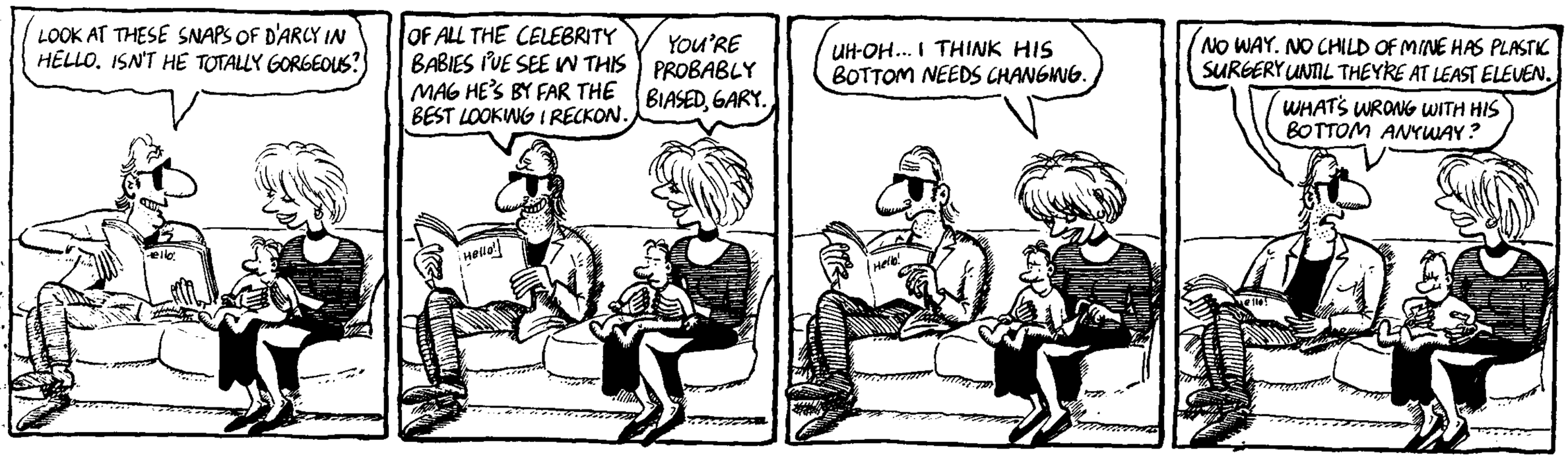
Prince Wills, if he were selected, could well end up in Parker-Bowles, the House named after the Rev. Norbert Parker-Bowles, founder of the school (1826-1872).

Said Housemaster of C Dorm, Mr Roy Terreblanche: "He will be very welcome here. The boys are all very stupid but we beat them into shape, ha ha ha."

Prince Wills is 2.

Celeb

LIGGER


LOOK AT THESE SNAPS OF D'ARCY IN HELLO. ISN'T HE TOTALLY GORGEOUS?
Hello!
OF ALL THE CELEBRITY BABIES I'VE SEE IN THIS MAG HE'S BY FAR THE BEST LOOKING I RECKON.
YOU'RE PROBABLY BIASED, GARY.
Hello!
UH-OH... I THINK HIS BOTTOM NEEDS CHANGING.
Hello!
NO WAY. NO CHILD OF MINE HAS PLASTIC SURGERY UNTIL THEY'RE AT LEAST ELEVEN.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIS BOTTOM ANYWAY?
Hello!

The Book of Rabin

Chapter One

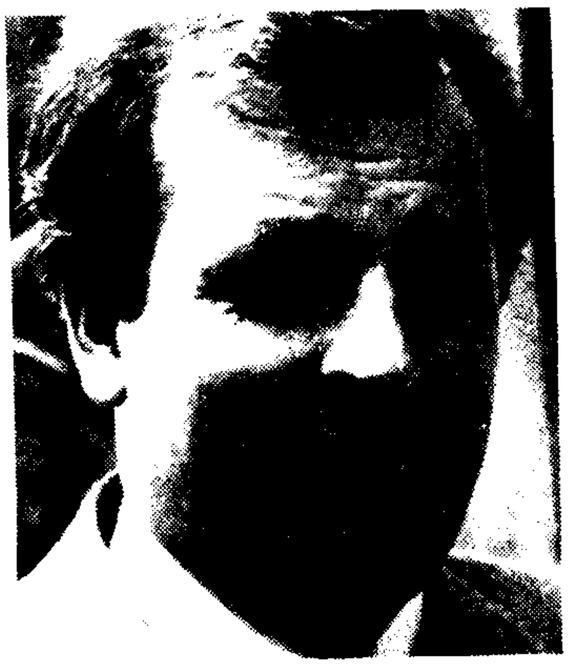
1. And it came to pass that when Shamir, the leader of the Sons of Israel, had departed hence there came a new leader.
2. And his name was called Rabin, which is to say The Peace-Giver.
3. And, lo, there were dwelling in the land of Israel many Arab-ites and they were known variously as the Araf-ites and the Hamas-ites.
4. And the Hamas-ites and the Araf-ites were divided one against the other, even as the cockroach is unto the dungbeetle.
5. For the Hamas-ites worshipped the God of the Iran-ites and he was called Aya-Tollah.
6. And the Araf-ites worshipped no god save only Yas-ser, he of the tea-towel.
7. Now there rose up certain of the Hamas-ites and did slew one of the Israelites even as he slept.
8. Then the people of Israel did cry aloud with one voice "String 'em up", which is to say "There should be an full enquiry."
9. For the Sons of Israel are merciful even as the day is long.
10. Then Rabin waxed wrath and cryeth: "I am an peaceful man, unlike Shamir who is gone from hence *(see Verse 2)*. Even so, I say unto you, the tribe of Hamas are going to regret this one or my name is not Rabin, son of Rabin."
11. Then he cast forth into the Leb-an-on one hundred men of the Hamas-ites, saying: "Take this blanket and fifty dollars and cometh not back."
12. And so the men of Hamas went forth cursing and shaking the dust from off their boots.
13. But then they came unto Leb-an-on, the Leban-ites said: "No way, José, cometh you here, ye People of Hamas. Be ye gone!"
14. So the Hamas-ites remained in the wilderness, living off locusts and handouts from the people of UN.
15. And the world cried out against Rabin, saying: "Cometh ye back, Shamir! For this Rabin bringeth the sword and treadeth the olive branch beneath his feet.
16. "For, lo! The Araf-ites and the Hamas-ites have long sworn enmity one unto another, but now Rabin hath e'en gone and united them.
17. "Verily, it is like unto the man who kicketh the ball into his own goal upon the field that is called the pitch."

(To be continued)

EXCLUSIVE!

Private Eye has obtained an exclusive copy of Mr Kelvin Mackenzie's Christmas speech delivered at a staff luncheon at El Arso's Restaurant, Wapping, on 23 December 1992.

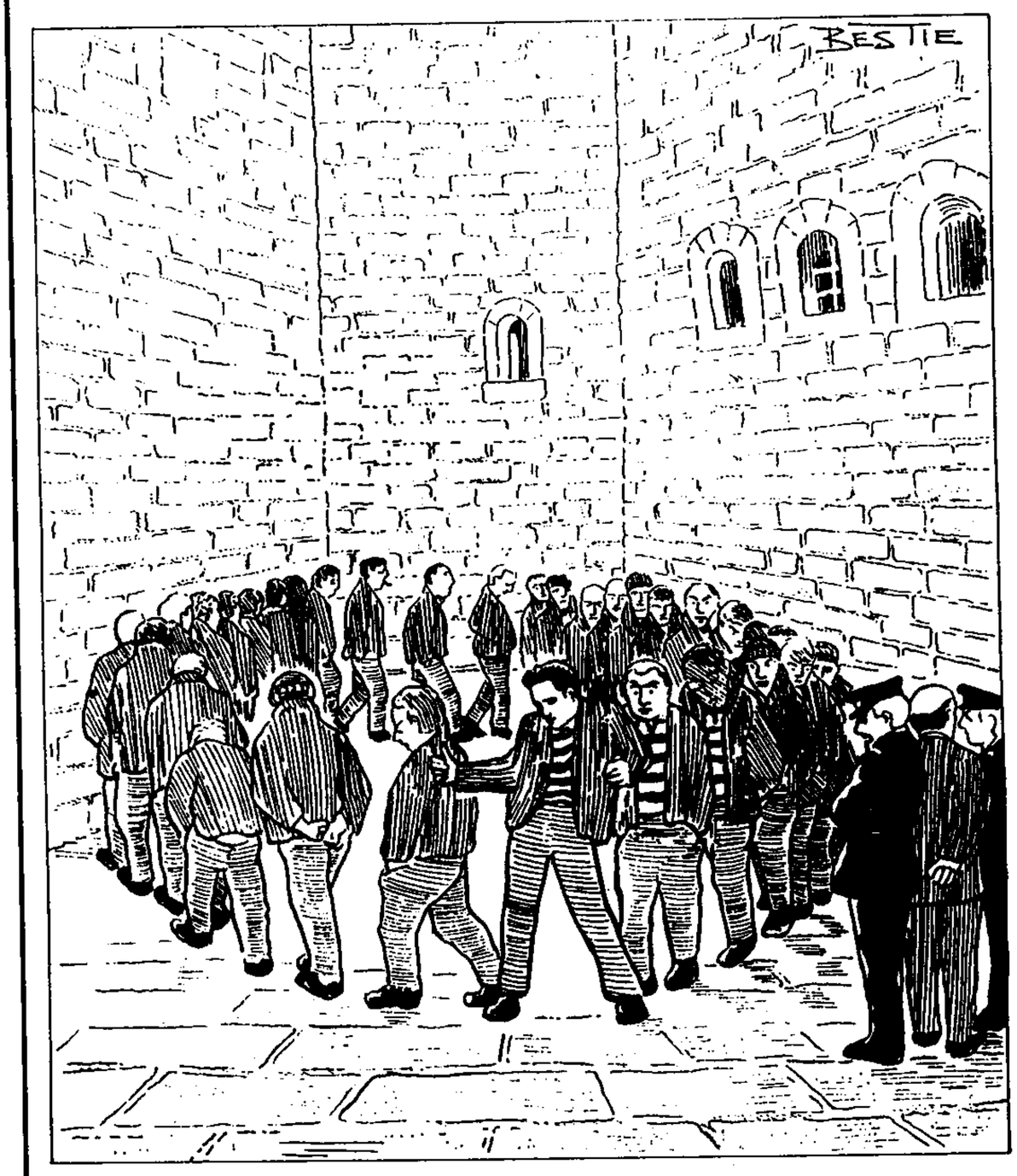
Cor! What a brilliant year it's been for us lot 'ere at the *Sun*! Oi! You with the tits, Tracy. Get yer T-shirt off and show us wot yer got! *(Raucous cheers)* No, but seriously, *(takes trousers down)* no wonder they call me cheeky! *(Laughter)* and look! *(bends over)* Here's my Anus Horribilis!! *(More laughter, cries of "Good old Kelv!" "What a plonker!" etc)* No, but seriously, I don't know 'bout the Turkey, but we stuffed the Royals!! Ha ha ha. *(Sycophantic laughter from assembled pissed hacks)* And now the loyal toast. Please raise your glasses of lager to His



Royal Highness King Murdoch of Filth!! *(Passes out)*

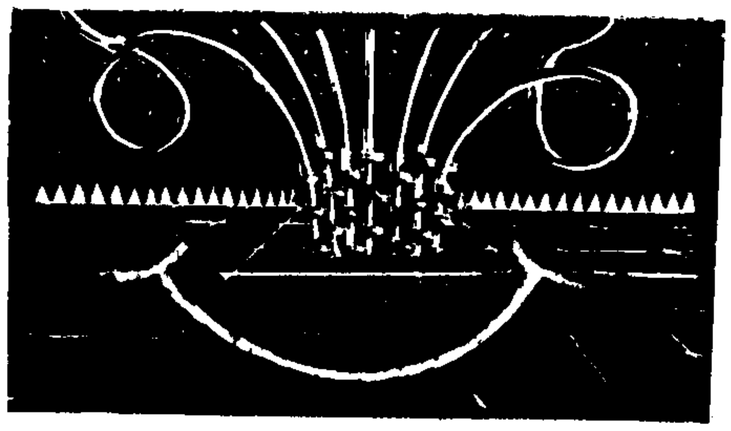
Editor's Note

This speech was obtained through legal means by journalists acting according to the code laid by the PCC — i.e. we stole it and then paid everyone off.



"I wouldn't wiggle your hips so much in here if I were you, Presley"

DIARY



SIR JOHN HARVEY-JONES

The alarm goes at 7.16, I had set it for 7.15, so it is abundantly clear to me that there is something seriously wrong somewhere. The alarm clock is in desperate need of a radical re-appraisal by someone who cares passionately about its health. So I pull of its back and take a bloody good look, levering out all sorts of unnecessary springs and screws to strip it down to its bare essentials. It turns out the whole thing's a load of bloody cobblers. The problem is that we as a nation care too much about all the tiddly little springs and screws without bothering to look at the larger clock beyond, so there's absolutely no doubt in my mind that the best plan is to eject all the tiddly bits, bung the rest back into the clock and reset the alarm for 7.28.

My worst fears are confirmed. Despite my intervention, the clock has now deteriorated so badly that it never manages to get to 7.28. In fact, it no longer ticks at all. If I have learnt one thing from my years as Britain's leading industrial entrepreneur, it is that a clock that does not tick will give off no alarm. Frankly, it's a lesson the rest of British industry badly needs to take on board, and it's a lesson I took pains to repeat in my first book *Making It Happen* and in my subsequent bestsellers, *Pulling It Out* and *Wiping It Down*.

Down in the kitchen, I focus my attention on making a halfway bloody decent cup of coffee and a slice of toast. As always, I favour the commonsense approach. I spoon two tablespoons of coffee granules into the toaster and place a slice of bread into the mug. I boil some water in the kettle, and then pour it onto the granules in the toaster. But then, once again, the whole thing goes up in smoke. Frankly, it saddens me very much indeed that so many of our homegrown toasters explode at the first drop of boiling water. It's simply not good enough, and it's a problem British industry really must get to grips with fairly and squarely in the years ahead.

Luckily the Chairman of the firm that made the toaster is a very close personal friend of mine, a fellow for whom I have an immense amount of admiration. I straightaway go round to his office to offer him the benefit of my experience.

"Quite frankly, Dick," I say to him. "In this day and age you simply cannot ask the consumer to accept exploding toasters. These days, the toaster market is highly competitive, and if we're going to beat our foreign rivals, we've got to generate nothing less than a complete sea-change. Forgive me for saying this, but at the moment your management methods are thoroughly out of date and, if I may say so, utterly ludicrous!" I then give off one of my endearing cackles, smile heartily, light my pipe and sit back, notebook in hand, to see what poor old Dick — for whom, incidentally, I have a very great deal of respect — has to say.

In fact, he says nothing, but sits bolt upright in his chair, his index finger on a buzzer beneath his desk. He is obviously pondering the far-reaching implications of my vision for the future. "I know", I continue, "that there are an awful lot of poor buggers like you in industry simply crying out for my help, so I came over as soon as I could." Before he can utter a single word of thanks, his office door bursts open, and a uniformed security guard marches in.

"You must be a uniformed security guard!" I laugh, setting him at his ease. "Now tell me, what's the view from where you're standing?"

"Okay, fattie, you've had your fun, now OUT!" he replies, helpfully lifting me out of my chair with both arms. He is obviously highly skilled at his job.

"What we're really talking about here, if I may say so, Dick, is what I call the Feelgood Factor," I remark over his shoulders to my old friend and fellow Captain of Industry.

"OUT!" says the uniformed security guard, and I must say I can't help but chuckle.

"We've got a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation on our hands," I shout to Dick as I am escorted with robust efficiency into the street. "And we must remember which are the big ducks and which are the little ducks, or else we're in danger of letting the lion out of the fishtank like a headless chicken."

These are hard times for the toaster industry, but I am left with the distinct impression that Dick and his senior command team will be implementing my advice, and that a toaster producing good, fresh coffee at a reasonable price is now one step further to the drawing-board.

Time, I think, for a bite of lunch. I queue up at a shop around the corner which has a sign outside saying "FISH AND CHIPS". When I get to the front of the queue, I say to the charming woman behind the counter, "You must be the woman behind the counter!" This puts her at her ease. "What d'you want, love?" she asks me. "Medium-rare steak, a good dollop of mash and a side-salad, please!" I say. But to my absolute horror and bewilderment, she tells me that she doesn't serve steak.

"Well I must say I'm simply AMAZED!" I laugh incredulously, "This really is an eye-opener! By golly! I'm sorry, but I'm literally gob-smacked, I really am! So you're really telling me that in this day and age I can't buy a perfectly simple medium-rare steak, a good dollop of mash and a side-salad in a fish and chip shop?"

"Just fish and chips, love," she replies.

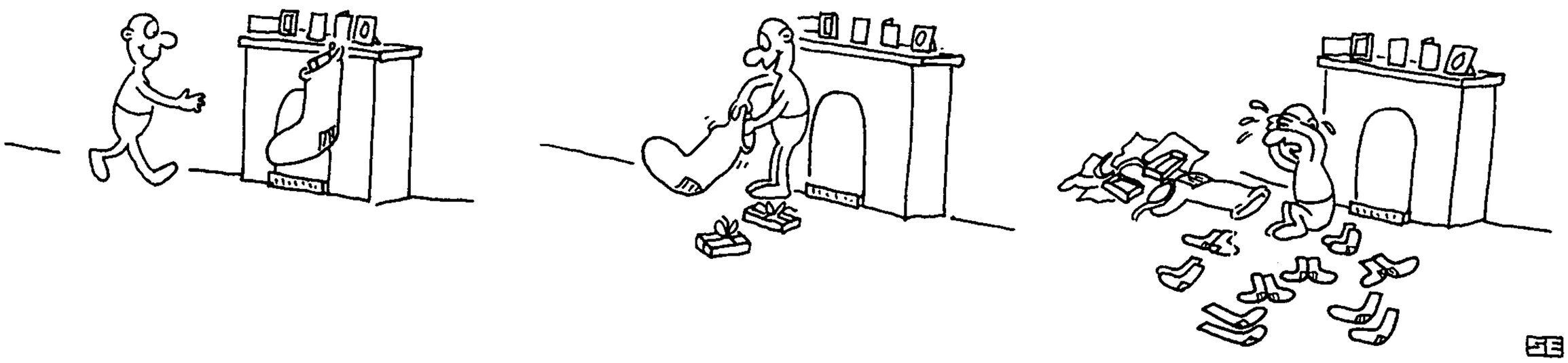
"And, tell me, little woman behind the counter, where do those fish come from?" I inquire bluntly, taking out my notebook.

"Out the sea," she replies.

"The sea! Can you believe it?!" I reply, utterly flabbergasted, "You really mean to tell me someone has to take them out of the sea, and then someone else has to transport them all the way here, and then someone else has to cook them?!" I hoot with laughter. "I'm literally gob-smacked!"

I take out my pipe, write her a Three-Point Agenda for Action, and hand it to her over the counter. "I'm arrogant enough to think I know British industry pretty well, and, quite frankly, I think you'll go completely bust in the next eighteen months!" I laugh pleasantly. She seems grateful for my advice, bidding me goodbye with a cheery wave of her ketchup bottle.

On my return home after a busy day, I remove my jacket. I find the words "PISS OFF FATSO" inscribed in tomato ketchup all over the back. This, I feel sure, is the charming lady's delightfully jocular way of thanking me for the great deal of time and effort I have devoted to sorting out her problems. Well, I like to do my bit, and frankly it's the sheer gratitude of ordinary, decent people like her that keeps me going. You know, sometimes I really don't know how they'd get by without me.



Literary Review

Scrambled Mogg

Picnics on Vesuvius — Steps Towards The Millennium
William Rees-Mogg
(Sidgwick & Jackson, £17.50)

JUST before Christmas, William Rees-Mogg wrote his last column for the *Independent*. Some bolshie sub gave it the derisive headline: "Is this the end of life as I know it?" Henceforth his compositions will be appearing in the *Times*.

Senior staff at the *Independent* are heartbroken. From the launch of the paper, they have found him such a dependable guide to the meaning of life, the universe and everything. All you need to do, they discovered, is read Rees-Mogg's columns carefully and then believe exactly the opposite. It never failed, they say, tearfully. Now they don't know what to think.

At least Rees-Mogg has left behind this treasury of past triumphs, so we can look back and admire the almost supernatural accuracy of his forecasting. On 22 January 1992, for example, looking into Fergie's tea-leaves, Rees-Mogg wrote: "Nor do I believe for a moment that the duchess's antics, innocent as they seem to be, are doing any damage to the monarchy. The question of the future of the crown is a non-question; it is all got up by the press." Put a few "nots" in there, in the right places, and this was an almost uncannily farsighted assessment.

Or again, on 11 March 1991, when base rates were 13 percent, Rees-Mogg warned "any further reduction in interest rates is likely to restart a major house boom". Indeed! Or rather — *not!* For those lucky few sharing the secret of how to interpret Rees-Mogg, this was priceless information.

No less inspired was his evaluation of Robert Maxwell on 11 November 1991, concluding: "I am glad he was buried yesterday on the Mount of Olives, which is a place of grace. I shall remember him with affection..." To the initiated, there could hardly have been a more savage condemnation.

Yet it is not just for his power of prediction that we must revere Rees-Mogg. Rather, it is for the sheer grandeur of his style, the way he sweeps so impressively from the tiniest detail of his own life to the great questions of history, with scarcely a pause — in fact, let's admit, with never a pause — between.

Who else would dare begin an article ("Landmarks in a Life Which Has Seen the Shadow of War Lifted") like this: "On my tenth birthday, 14 July 1938, I was given an ice-cream cake with a cricket-bat and ball on top; it was big enough to be shared with the 30 boys in my house at school. Four months before, Hitler had invaded Austria... Two months after my birthday, Neville Chamberlain flew to Munich"?

COOKERY TIPS

At the time, Rees-Mogg was probably alone in realising which was the critical date of the three. Now we are all privileged to share that thrilling perspective — and there are many such moments here.

Truly, he is a man of destiny. "Destiny has a way of making itself," he says here in passing of his own marriage. She may have been his secretary, but it was meant.

It is this sublime confidence in himself, as a Mogg and a Wessex man, that permits him to take such long views, not just from year to year, but from century to century, millennium to millennium, into eternity indeed. For Rees-Mogg, it just all joins up.

So what does the great seer foresee? Good news! He foresees *doooooom*. Yup, things are going to be OK! Who would have thought it?

According to Rees-Mogg, the world is facing imminent economic and social collapse, what with the slitty eyes beavering away, mugging getting out of hand, overpopulation, nuclear proliferation, AIDS and all.

On AIDS, says Rees-Mogg with a touch of justifiable pride, he has done "special work". There's a whole section about it here, and his conclusion is, as ever, that only religion can save us: "Christian morality is a strategy for survival," you see. Condoms are useless. "The 'unzip a condom' approach to the HIV epidemic reminds me of the filter-tip response to the issue of cigarette smoking and cancer," he says scornfully.

There may be those who will say that this remark shows that Rees-Mogg, for all his wisdom, is a little out of touch with modern life. After all, they might observe, most condoms these days use the more comfortable button-fastening; zips are hardly ever seen.

But this is petty quibbling. Of the basic truth, that only becoming a Catholic right away can avert the end of the world, there can be no doubt. The millennium is coming, you see. "By the year 2000" is Rees-Mogg's favourite way of beginning a sentence. "As we approach 2000 years after Christ, this ancient human fear of some final calamity is not as unthinkable as it would have seemed 50 years ago," he says.

Only a "worldwide spiritual revolution" can help. Only the Pope can resist Islam. Only saints, and sages from Somerset, can lead us now.

Travelling the country, he met some black people once. "I was particularly touched by the young black boy, with the scars of handcuffs on his wrists, who said to me: 'It must be grand to be a lord'."

What he seems not to realise is that we all feel like this about him. Our gratitude is bottomless. For as he says, "saints are so important in the spread of religious belief. They profess their faith, but their conduct is the real evidence of its truth." Yes, indeed.

"I am certain that we are all eternal spirits, with an eternal purpose," Rees-Mogg tells us. "We are all like eggshells filled with spiritual realities we cannot begin to understand, filled indeed with the whole glory of Heaven."

Some of us are hardboiled, some soft, others poached, and a few are scrambled, but we all can, if we choose, enter the new year and eventually the next millennium, hand in hand with Lord Rees-Mogg.

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
TWO WEEKS OFF FOR CHRISTMAS — IT'S A DISGRACE! NO WONDER THIS COUNTRY'S IN A MESS!
JAN 4TH
1993 DIARY
CALL THAT A DECENT BREAK?! I'M GOING SKIING!
JAN 4TH
SLALOM BOOTS

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

UNEQUIVOCALLY the year's most influential book and biggest seller was Andrew Morton's black propaganda, *Diana: Her True Story*.

In time-honoured tradition, booksellers completely failed to predict the likely interest in the book, and for much of the time would-be customers had to do without.

They also had to do without Madonna's idea of *Sex*, coitus interruptus prevailing until very recently when the plastic bags containing the "book" reemerged in shop windows. Madonna's silly frolic was published by Sucker & Whorebag, hitherto associated with quality, not quantity. But not any more.

The Booker judges funked choosing a winner and divided the spoils between Barry Ondaatsworth and Michael Untje, bearded authors both. This feeble compromise raised a renewed flicker of interest in the recently wilting Booker.

Tim Waterstone kept opening bookshops, extending himself to the States, including Boston and Chicago. In the UK Waterstone's, with books on the floor, and Dillons, with discounted books, continued to fight it out, piling the shops high with new titles that few really wanted but hoping that someone would get the message and buy as many as possible of the pretty looking objects.

The revived idea of publishing new fiction in paperback did not quite make the inroads it should have done, and certainly not the profits. Most "literary" novels sold 300 or 400 copies in hardback, and the biggest selling titles sold tens of thousands fewer than they would have done two years ago.

The year's biggest buyer was, undoubtedly, Skinny Cheetham, who couldn't say no to individuals, companies or books. He gobbled up one of the two newest high-profile imprints, Chappeople, with its list of bright young authors such as Hammond Innes, Winston Graham, Peter Rawlinson and the Prince of Wales. Thrusting young Jack Higgins declined to become a chattel and strode away to Michael Joseph. The other "new" outfit, Sir Sincere-Stevenson's eponymous fleur de lis, was given a blood transfusion by Reed-Elsevier as we must from 1 January learn to call it.

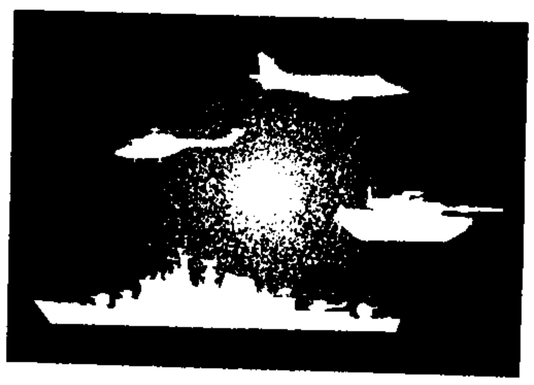
Cap'n Bob's Macdonald was sold to Little, Brown; Harrap to Chambers; and Gollancz to Cassell. The most successful publishers of the year were Michael O'Mara, who did Diana's *True Story*, and Wordsworth Editions, who daringly published out of copyright classics, *without critical apparatus*, at £1 a volume.

Salman Rushdie, as if to brave an increased price on his head by the mad mullahs, attended more parties than ever and refused to be confined to barracks. On the evening of 15 December he was seen at the *Sunset Times* and Jonathan Cape's parties simultaneously.

'Bookworm'

Apologies to Chloe Chard and Zara Steiner, whom I accused in Books of the Year (Eye 809) of recommending Michael Ondaatje's The English Patient in the FT. They did no such thing. The reviewers who did were Gerald Cadogon and JDF Jones. My error was due to the FT's graphically-challenged layout.

ARMING IRAQ



Question time

AN INTERESTING comparison of the relative weight given in Britain and the United States to the illegal arming of the dictator of Iraq between 1984 and 1990 is the strength and status of the inquiries set up to investigate the matter.

In the US Henry Gonsalez presides over one of the biggest investigations ever instituted by congress. It has a permanent staff of 72, financial backing and economic powers which will enable inquiries to be made not only in the US but anywhere else in the world.

In Britain, the matter has been dropped into the lap of His Honour Mr Justice Rashleigh Folliott Scott, a former Cambridge rugby blue. Scott has (at most) about five staff, not all of them full-time, borrowed from the very government which is under criticism for its role in Iraqgate.

The lawyer who is coordinating the Scott investigation is himself a treasury solicitor from the department of government of that name which came under heavy criticism in the supergun hearings of the Commons select committee on trade and industry.

Lord Justice Scott may seek to inform himself on the charges against the government and ministers' replies to them by reading the Commons debate on 23 November. If so, he is bound to be disappointed. Small though his staff is, it is bigger and more able than that of any of the MPs or political parties, who pick up most of their information from newspaper cuttings and old copies of Hansard.

Little or no new information emerged from the debate about the amazing arming of World Enemy No 1. Opening for the government, Michael Heseltine closely followed his favourite maxim: when in doubt, rant. At one stage he was asked, satirically, if he could shout a little louder.

His main argument was that other countries exported more arms to Iraq than Britain. Between January 1987 and August 1990, he disclosed, $11.3bn worth of arms were imported by Iraq, but "only" 2 percent of that, about $200m worth, came from Britain. Allowing $200m worth of illegal arms exports in two and a half years is not a bad whack at the law-breaking at which Tarzan is developing considerable expertise.

Yet Heseltine's rant worked. Opposition MPs were hopelessly ill-informed. The only two Labour MPs still in the House who consistently asked awkward questions on last year's select committee for trade and industry — Doug Hoyle (Warrington) and Jim Cousins (Newcastle) — were not even called by the speaker. The only new information from the opposition came from Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton) who, in a seven-minute speech, revealed that a company in his constituency, Microwave Modules, which had a long record of exporting surveillance equipment to Iraq, was almost certainly involved in exporting to that country a "power control system used in missiles fired by an explosive charge — that is, a supergun".

Needless to say, the equipment was passed off as civilian — providing power supply to the state electricity board. Needless to say the department of trade decided that this export did not need a licence. And needless to say no reply whatever was forthcoming on this point from defence secretary Malcolm Rifkind when he wound up.

The *Eye* is keen to help the beleaguered Lord Justice Scott in his inquiries, and advises him to steer clear of the politicking in the debate and confront the basic questions, some of which are:

1 Why did the government ease the guidelines for selling arms to Iraq in 1988 without disclosing anything about the change to parliament, public or press? Does not this breathtaking exercise in secrecy suggest that the whole arms-to-Iraq business was conducted behind closed doors?

2 How were so many companies allowed for so long to manufacture and export arms to Iraq without anyone stopping them? How did Walter Somers and Forgemasters make all and ship most of the superguns Saddam wanted? Why were so many other companies like Microwave Modules, Ordtech and Allivane International, not to mention the bigger boys like British Aerospace, allowed to become merchants of death to Saddam Hussein without any interference from any part of the government?

3 What exactly was the role of David Hastie when he went to the Baghdad arms fair in 1989? The ministry of defence says he was "seconded" to it from BAe, but "seconded" back to BAe just for the time of the arms fair so he could go there to satisfy his own "personal interest" in what was on display there. Are we really expected to believe this cock-and-bull story, and wasn't the real truth that Hastie was representing that substantial section of the MoD which was determined to keep the eyes of the British arms industry firmly fixed on the Market That Mattered Most — Iraq?

4 What was the role of customs and excise, which boasts that it is the only government agency which carries out "an investigative role" and has the power to prosecute independently of the law officers and the police? If so, why did the crack investigators allow 44 supergun shipments to go to Iraq before they managed to stop the last six? Why, after finally catching up with supergun, did customs knuckle under when the attorney-general, Sir Patrick Mayhew, told them to drop the charges against engineer Chris Cowley and Midlands businessman Peter Mitchell?

5 What about Sir Patrick himself? Why did he tell customs to drop the charges against Cowley and Mitchell and refuse to intervene much later when customs charged Paul Henderson and two other Midlands businessmen? Was he told that much more damaging material would come out of the Cowley/Mitchell case than from the Henderson case?

6 How to explain the behaviour of Alan Clark? Is he really just a nutter who says one thing one day, one the next? Or was he a dedicated Thatcherite who realised that the one manufacturing industry capable of winning substantial export orders in the late 1980s was the arms industry, and believed that British guns could be put to good use and profit in slaughtering foreigners in the Middle East — and that the embargo (like the man who announced it, then Sir Geoffrey Howe) was wimpish, pinkish, UN-inspired consensus drivel which should be ignored as much as possible? And wasn't Clark talking for a wide swathe of people enriching themselves from the new Iraqi boom, including, crucially...

7 ...the intelligence services. Why did MI6 tip off customs about the supergun in April 1990? Was it because it suddenly realised that the arming of Iraq, in which MI6 had conspired, had created a monster which would soon become an enemy? Why did the same MI6 urge the government to block the prosecutions of Cowley and Mitchell? Was it because someone feared what might emerge at such a trial? And why did the same MI6 refuse to intervene with the government or with customs to save its own colleague, Paul Henderson, from prosecution in the Matrix Churchill case? Was this because MI6 was confident that with the necessary "immunity certificates" the prosecution, like those of Ordtech at Reading last spring, would succeed without too much fuss?

And if the answer to all or even any of these questions is Yes, isn't it time that serious thought was given to bringing the intelligence community under public and legal control?

These are some questions for Lord Justice Scott to ask and answer. The *Eye* will be suggesting others in the weeks ahead — and also naming some of the less well-known witnesses Lord Justice Scott might like to intervene.

This issue's suggestion is Mr Laurence Kingswood, a solicitor and senior partner with Baileys Shaw & Gillett of 17 Queens Square, London WC1. Kingswood sat on the board of the ill-fated arms company Astra, for which his firm acted.

Baileys Shaw & Gillett also acted for TDG, the once "blue-chip" arms/engineering company which was bought up by the Iraqi government. There were two Iraqi intelligence agents on the board. Both gave as their address: 17 Queens Square, London WC1.

PRISON SUICIDE

Winson, lose some

WHAT is going on at Winson Green prison? More and more inmates — known suicide risks — seem free to take their own lives, yet at the inquests into their deaths no implied blame is ever levelled at the prison authorities in whose "care" they are supposed to be.

The men's families see this as rough justice; and to the lay observer, the track record of Birmingham coroner Dr Richard Whittington to Winson Green's growing death toll indeed seems extraordinary.

Dr Whittington has presided over a stream of hearings into hangings and other deaths at the crumbling Victorian jail, which in the last decade has seen almost as many hangings as the whole country saw this century under capital punishment (that includes 11 since 1985.)

Admittedly some suicides could *not* have been predicted; but the vast majority were known to have suicidal tendencies. Several were mentally disturbed and had been transferred to Winson Green specifically because it was supposed to be able to offer proper care. In almost every case they were ignored, neglected or simply forgotten and left to kill themselves.

If a mentally disturbed prisoner with suicidal tendencies is left free to take his life while in custody, the commonsense view would be that a "lack of care" verdict should be returned by the jury, pointing the finger, however limply, at the prison authorities. But it is a verdict Dr Whittington seldom advises. Indeed, in almost every case he has heard he has tried to persuade juries away from it. Doubtless he has good legal reasons for doing so, but these are lost on the dead men's families.

Last month Dr Whittington enraged the family of the prison's most recent suicide, Errol Commock, who hanged himself in the notorious D2 wing in July after being transferred from the prison hospital by a locum doctor who had never seen him before.

He was in the hospital because he had tried to kill himself before and was clearly mentally disturbed, refusing to speak or only talking to inanimate objects and refusing to leave his cell. The prison's response was to lock him alone in his cell 23 hours a day without any checks, except at mealtimes.

Despite this Whittington told the inquest jury that no one could have predicted Commock's death and that he could see no other verdict open to them than simple suicide, and not "lack of care". They took his advice.

Whittington has presided over too many similar cases to detail them all, but the death toll includes:

● Sajjan Singh Atwal, sent to Winson Green in 1988 after he tried to kill himself at Sudbury open prison. He was transferred from the prison's hospital wing by Dr Faizur Rahman, who failed to tell prison officers that Atwal was suicidal and needed watching. Atwal hanged himself. A "lack of care" verdict seemed obvious — but Whittington did his best to direct the jury to rule that it was suicide. They refused and stuck with lack of care.

● Matt Gilmour was classed as a suicide risk at another prison after he slashed his throat with a razor and set fire to his cell. Dr Rahman popped up again in the witness box after Gilmour hanged himself at Winson Green. Rahman said no one could have known Gilmour was in danger — an opinion with which Whittington agreed. Again he directed the jury to a suicide verdict, and this time they went along.

● Keith Cooper hanged himself six days after being transferred to Winson Green from Shrewsbury prison for special care after making a suicide attempt. Again Dr Rahman gave evidence, this time claiming Cooper's earlier attempts were just "attention seeking". Again Whittington directed the jury towards a suicide or misadventure verdict. They chose the latter.

● Horace Boswell hanged himself in August 1991 — unsupervised, despite an unsuccessful suicide attempt days earlier. Again Whittington guided the jury away from the obvious lack of care verdict towards suicide.

● Mark Dawson hanged himself and David

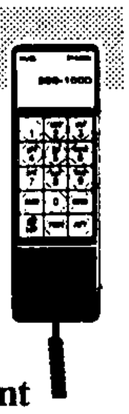
Taylor took an overdose, again while unsupervised despite previous suicide attempts and warnings from, respectively, their cell-mate and family. Again Whittington asked the jury to return suicide verdicts.

PS: Dr Rahman sprung up again in a recent high court case over the death of John Ryan, who died from dehydration *in the prison hospital*. Rahman examined him the day before he died and decided he was psychotic rather than desperate for a drink. Ryan died in agony with the central heating full on in his hospital cell in a July heatwave. Rahman left the prison service the day after giving evidence last month and returned to Pakistan.

PPS: Winson Green is of course famous for the death of Barry Prosser, beaten to death in a cell only accessible to prison officers 10 years ago, and for the beatings given to the Birmingham Six. Prison officers were prosecuted — and found innocent in both cases.

MOBILE PHONES

It's a phoney war...



ANYONE who is not a complete hermit will have noticed the recent blizzard of adverts for mobile telephones.

One company, Vodaphone, has spent almost £10 million in the past six months alone — about £6 million on TV commercials and an amazing £4 million on newspaper ads, proclaiming the mobile-phone "revolution" and introducing a new range of allegedly "cut-price" low-tariff services.

This campaign is in fact a desperate attempt by the existing duopoly of Vodaphone and Cellnet to strengthen their grip on the market by locking a potential new wave of customers into long-term contracts, usually with a rolling one year's notice, before the arrival of new competition from Mercury.

In six months' time Mercury — no doubt aided by an equally lavish advertising campaign, complete with Harry Enfield and Mr Cholmondeley-Warner — will be launching its "personal communication network", a digital mobile system with call-charges a fraction of those currently imposed by Cellnet and Vodaphone. Hence the duopoly's panic.

Mobile phones are easy money. Lack of choice, high call rates and uncertainty over billings has made it one of the most profitable ventures in the UK. Vodaphone's turnover in the six months to September 1992 was £320 million — on which it made pre-tax profits of £160 million. (No wonder it can afford to blow so much money on advertising. Industry figures show that, on the average customer's annual Vodaphone bill of £710, the company makes a profit of £360.)

Cellnet is almost as happy. Despite having only 44 per cent of the UK market, it nevertheless recorded profits of £106 million in the last financial year.

The operators milk their duopoly in every conceivable way. Callers to a mobile number often hear only a recorded voice saying: "It is not possible to connect your call at the moment. Please try later." What they may not know is that each of these failed attempts, even if it is only a local call, will be charged at a full minute rate of 33p — approximately 10 times the usual British Telecom rate. Trying again costs another 33p; and so on.

The new "low tariff" services being offered in the current advertising campaign — Vodaphone's "Low-Call" and Cellnet's "Lifetime" — are highly deceptive. Devised as a pre-emptive strike against the Mercury network, they are deliberately targeted at self-employed and domestic users (hence the emphasis on vets and women motorists), rather than the large companies and expense-account executives who have hitherto provided most of their custom.

Cellnet and Vodaphone are trying to persuade these "small customers" that mobile phones aren't as expensive as is commonly, and rightly, thought. What they neglect to mention, however, is that anyone who uses the phone more than once a day will actually end up with even higher bills on the low-cost tariff than if they had signed up for the standard service.

Oddly, none of our fearless national newspapers has seen fit to expose this racket. Could their silence by any chance be related to the fact that their own revenues have benefited so handsomely from the Vodaphone and Cellnet campaigns?

ENERGY

New sources, old tricks

ON THE LAST day of Parliament — when it could be guaranteed to attract no attention at all — the government finally released the results of its two studies into renewable energy (see *Eyes passim*).

Both studies were cynically set up to head off attacks before the last election over Britain's pathetic record on the environment; and both were forced to use spurious treasury methods of calculation which prove — surprise, surprise — that major renewable energy sources are too expensive to consider.

The main report, by the Renewable Energy Advisory Group (REAG), calls only for "quite modest" expenditure on those activities which make no significant inroads on the energy scene: burning rubbish and using the smoke to heat water. It suggests that the two important areas — offshore wind and wave, which require heavy initial investment — should have no further expenditure at all.

The scientists on the committee allowed themselves to be hoodwinked by the treasury into accepting a book-keeping system designed to discourage public spending on long-term environmental projects. The operation is a good example of how the treasury manipulates the government machine by insisting on the use of a spurious "discount" system, which demands a required rate of return from investment of 8 percent. This number was plucked out of the air in 1989 by the then chief secretary to the treasury, one John Major, who was always obedient to civil service demands. He said the rate had to be increased from 5 percent to enable public sector investment to match the rate of return made in the private sector. Since then returns in private industry have gone down to a minus figure, as businesses have crashed; and the official minimum lending rate has come down by 3 percent in the last three months. But for the treasury, which clings to its 8 percent, nothing has changed.

(If the same figures had been applied in the past, Britain would never have built a single power station — nuclear or even coal-fired — nor have drawn a single barrel of oil from the North Sea.)

Even if aiming for a more realistic rate of return, the discounting method still discriminates against any project which needs major capital expenditure at the start, favouring those with a small initial outlay, regardless of whether costs rise sharply later on. This means that big wave and wind projects appear to produce expensive electricity, even though the "fuel" comes free; but gas turbines which are cheap to put up *appear* economic — even though gas will become increasingly expensive and then run out.

But that's in the future, and who at the treasury cares about that? Under the surreal treasury system, gas-fired electricity is a good buy.

The REAG report suggests the government should stop further "significant" expenditure on the two biggest potential sources, offshore wind turbines and wave power stations. Work on offshore wind should be abandoned on the extraordinary ground that "it will require additional technology development before it can be effectively exploited". Well, yes; but might it not be a good idea for Britain to try to develop the technology?

As for wave energy, its opponents occupy powerful positions in the energy establishment and they have fought hard against it ever since it first appeared in 1976 as a dangerous rival to their nuclear ambitions. They ensured it was the one technology which had no representative on the REAG committee.

It is the subject of a separate report by scientist Tom Thorpe, who is forced by civil service convention to stay with the discounting method. But those who study his graphs can see what the cost of wave energy really will be simply by changing the rate of return.

The cheapest device for gaining useful energy from deep sea waves is called the Clam, a circular tube looking like an enormous car tyre, 60 metres in diameter, with 12 compartments which expand and contract as waves rise and fall. This pushes a pocket of air from one compartment to another, driving an air turbine. The official costing is 8p-9p for a unit of electricity with an 8 percent discount rate. But this comes down to 6p with a 5 percent rate and 2p with a 2 percent discount rate.

The most likely device is called an oscillating water column and the National Engineering Laboratory, a part of the department of trade and industry, is ready to build one in the open Atlantic. Its cost is put at a ridiculous 17p with an 8 percent discount rate, or 12p at 5 percent and about 5p at 2 percent — pluck your discount rate from the air and pretend it means something.

While Britain desperately needs a long-term energy policy, shortsighted Tim Eggar, the energy minister, and Michael Heseltine, his ultimate boss now that energy has been appropriated by the DTI, were both keen to sit on the inquiry results for as long as possible. With no sensible long-term policy, and while running down the coal industry as fast as public opinion will allow, they did not want to encourage enthusiasm for anything that would mean spending money.

POLICE 5

Double trouble

WHILE serious doubts have been raised over the methods of South Wales police following the release from prison of the Cardiff Three (long predicted in the *Eye*), public confidence in their North Wales colleagues is also at an all time low.

This is as the result of a year-long investigation into physical and sexual abuse at children's homes in Clwyd and Gwynedd made by four former residents. Ever since the cases featured heavily in the *Observer* and on HTV, the alleged victims and their supporters have complained of police intimidation and harassment.

Steven Meesham, who claims he was the victim of a serious sexual assault by a senior police officer while in care, has been stopped in his car three times in recent weeks when visiting his former home town of Wrexham. Alison Taylor, the social worker who first blew the whistle, also complains of the "oppressive" attitude of North Wales officers investigating the case.

Representations have now been made to Welsh secretary of state David Hunt that perhaps it isn't a good idea for allegations against North Wales police to be investigated by members of the same force. Nevertheless, Inspector Dai Knacker has finally got round to interviewing a superintendent and the papers have been sent to the crown prosecution service.

MEMBERS of Murkeyside police authority are eagerly awaiting publication of ex-assistant chief constable Alison Halford's memoirs, *Up The Greasy Pole*, to be published by Constable (ho! ho!).

Meanwhile the civilian and uniformed wings of the MPA have fallen out over the promotion of superintendent Glyn Jones, a guest at the party where the notorious swimming pool non-incident allegedly didn't take place.

Authority chairman George Bundred CBE, his deputy Harry Rimmer and ex-Liverpool lord-mayor-for-all-of-six-weeks Lady Doreen Jones, see the promotion as a betrayal by chief constable Jim Sharples, and they are no longer on speaking terms. Bundred now regards all his senior officers as incompetent nitwits — a conclusion he reached after a train journey in the company of deputy chief constable David "Foggy" Howe.

Bundred is also disappointed that he only got a gong-lette in the 1992 honours list — the Halford affair having ruined his chances of ever getting a peerage. He must console himself instead with the toytown robes of lord mayor of Knowsley.

Bundred, Rimmer and Lady Doreen will also be unhappy with Sharples's decision to reinstate PC Alan Maguire BEM to the rank of sergeant. Maguire, very much the forgotten man in the affair, is expected to stay well away from swimming pools during the remainder of his time on Murkeyside.

In the City

WHILE small investors are being conned by new-style pyramid and chain letter "get-poor-quick" schemes, the fraud flavour of the moment for the international flim-flam man is "prime bank notes".

All over the world in recent months financial institutions who should know better have been taken by the supposed mega-returns awaiting those who trade in these mythical financial instruments which, like the unicorn, are much talked of but seldom seen.

The latest set of victims includes the governments of the South Pacific island of Nauru and Croatia, who have lost at least $20 million in a fraud which is currently being investigated by the City police fraud squad and the Australian police.

At the centre of the fraud are the former London partner of the prestigious Sydney law firm of Allen, Allen and Hemsley; a mysterious Fijian lecturer on banking; a company from the Pacific tax haven of Vanuatu which operated first in Switzerland and then in the Bahamas; and a now closed Caribbean bank run by two recently indicted Americans.

The prime bank note scam works something like this. The notes are supposedly issued by major international, usually American, banks which, like the Bank of England, promise to pay the bearer on demand the face value. Backed by this promise these prime notes are supposedly traded in great secrecy under the watchful eye of the federal authorities in Washington. Only a select few are allowed to play in this market, buying at a discount and selling at a profit. But for those who do, rich returns are promised.

Little information, however, is provided to investors (it's on a need to know basis only) and a little knowledge is always a dangerous thing where the fraudsman is concerned. This is definitely a "trust me" investment. So secret is the prime bank note scheme that even those who have been approached find it hard to explain. As a result, many continue to believe that the market in such notes exists, despite lots of evidence to the contrary including, most potently of all, the losses suffered by those who were suckered in.

The government of Nauru controls a major investment fund, the product of compensation for the mining of its phosphate deposits. Between $35 and $40 million from that fund was invested in a prime note scheme by Ronald Powles, partner in charge of Allen's London office. Powles came to London in 1989 after resigning as managing partner in Sydney in uncertain circumstances. Allen acted for the Nauru government. Another $8.5 million was also invested in the scheme by the Bank of Croatia through Powles' office. Smaller investments were made by two other institutions.

The money went to a company called Linpar, which was providing access into the prime bank note market. Linpar was run first from Lausanne and then Nassau by Canadian Patrick Madden, formerly a partner in a leading Calgary law firm.

But the mastermind behind the scheme would seem to have been a mysterious Asian known only as Dr Gopal, a one-time lecturer at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. Little or nothing is known about Gopal, even whether that is his real name.

Also playing a key role in the scheme was the Commonwealth National Bank of Antigua, which was closed down recently by the island authorities. CNB was really run from New York by two Americans who were indicted in December on a separate matter involving a $3 million stolen cheque.

At the beginning of 1992 the Nauru authorities became concerned about the amounts invested by Powles through Linpar and decided to pull out their money, which at that time still totalled around $35 million. But after receiving back $15 million, they ran into problems and a lot of excuses from Powles, Linpar and CNB.

Continued pressure from Nauru failed to produce the $20 million, but in November the alarm bells went off in Sydney, perhaps from examining banking transactions through the London office's clients account. Managing partner John Lehane arrived in London to see Powles. What he found instead was a note from Powles stating that all was far from well, dreadful mistakes etc and that he had gone outside and might be a little while. Several days later Powles turned up in the psychiatric unit of a Sydney hospital.

After studying Powles' files, which in the rush to leave he had helpfully left behind intact, Allen's called in the police. They also traced $8 million of the missing Nauru money to Singapore where it was frozen. The lawyers have also started proceedings against those involved in the disappearance of the still missing $12 million.

Some of those involved in the transactions may well have been as duped as the victims. But others, such as Powles and the elusive Dr Gopal, may be judged less charitably.

Meanwhile anyone approached to take part in the prime bank note scheme would do well to miss out on this good thing — or a seeming twin involving yet another weird and wonderful secret market, this time in standby letters of credit. That is unless you also believe in Father Christmas.

THE SEPTIC isle of Jersey has scored another triumph for self-regulation of its all-important financial services industry.

Shortly before Christmas local company administrator Nicholas Hanley declared himself "en desastre" (Jersey's archaic French way of saying bankrupt), owing clients £4.5 million. Where the money went has not yet been made clear; but the strong suspicion is that Hanley gambled much, if not all of it, away.

While Hanley, an English qualified barrister in his mid-30s, was little-known even in Jersey, he was extremely well known in several London casinos and to certain bookmakers. Indeed, at the end his major creditors, other than his clients, were four casinos: Crockfords; the Ritz; and the Carlton in Cannes (each owed £50,000); and the Clermont, owed £20,000.

Hanley was described as "a solid gold customer" and "a £250,000 punter" by one casino source who had observed him gambling £25,000 a night over a two-year period. His betting, both at the tables and track, was described as "frenetic; he really had the bug". Hanley, whose assets total only a half share in a £240,000 house, is now, in that time-honoured phrase, "helping police with their inquiries".

Who his clients were and where their £4.5 million came from remains to be disclosed. There must be some dark suspicions about those who would entrust such large sums to such a small, one-man-and-a-filing-cabinet operation.

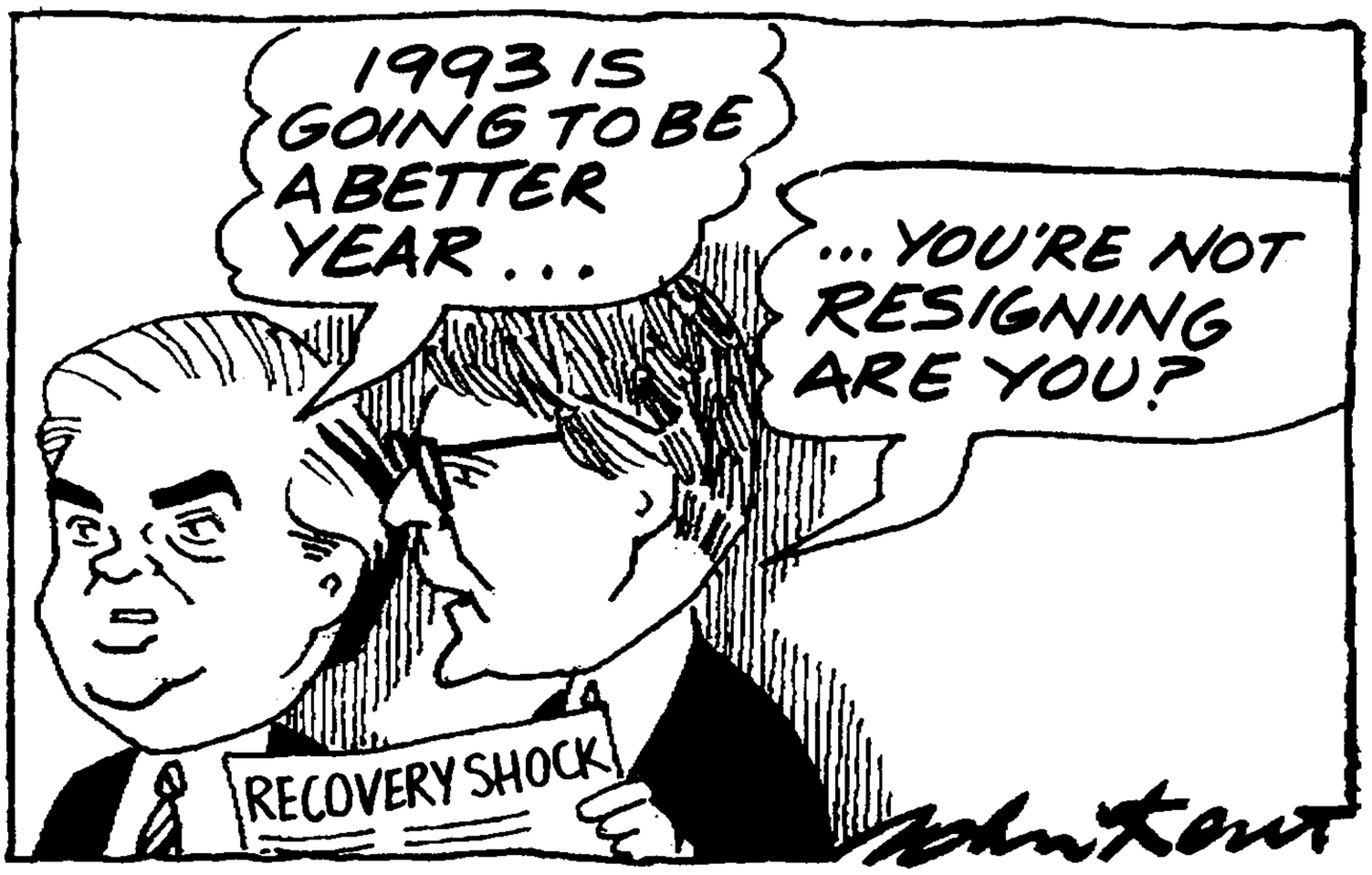
The truth about the disappearance of the money was only forced out by the actions of three clients, their identities discreetly disguised behind three local companies, who threatened to make him bankrupt when they could not obtain their money. Until that time it appears the Jersey authorities were once again blissfully unaware of the time bomb ticking away in Hanley's Hill Street office at the heart of the St Helier financial district.

The Hanley scandal will do little, therefore, to encourage confidence in Jersey at a time of growing competition among tax havens for offshore funds. Which means local politicos will be more than usually eager to cover up and ensure that Hanley is dealt with quickly and with little publicity outside the septic isle.

IT SEEMS the secret Scotland Yard investigation into allegations of corruption surrounding the Polly Peck case has had to consider suggestions that a senior legal figure could be involved. Just how the investigation may effect the Polly Peck trial due later this year is far from clear, but it is undoubtedly a matter for concern among those involved.

MANY aspects of the way collapsed Landhurst Leasing operated were far from usual. Hardly surprising in a business which developed a possible £40 million black hole. Former customers tell of being advanced multi-million pound sums on the basis of agreements signed in blank; of discovering after the collapse that they supposedly owed amounts greater than they recognised; of bigger loans made to enable earlier overdue payments to be met; of leased vehicles being sold in order to make payments. All of which raises serious questions about the Landhurst accounts and the money poured into costly banking transactions.

'Slicker'



O·B·N

Godfrey Talbot, the BBC's first court correspondent and a loyal supporter of the royal family, spoke of his joy at the news [of Princess Anne's wedding]. "It's a piece of good cheer for the nation. It will be welcomed not only by the House of Windsor but by millions of people around the world who admire the Princess Royal and her work.

"In her role as president of Save the Children, she has gone to mucky and dangerous corners of the world. She is like a cross between Mother Teresa and Florence Nightingale."

Sunday Times

[Tiny] Rowland, sporting a tan that owes more to peacemaking missions in Mozambique than the weather in Chester Square where he resides in London, quickly put the threat of retirement to rest when I interviewed him last week.

MELVYN MARCKUS (City Editor)
Observer

Submitted by Nicholas Robinson, Mike Frost.

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Kit Hesketh Harvey on Mary Archer, Independent on Sunday

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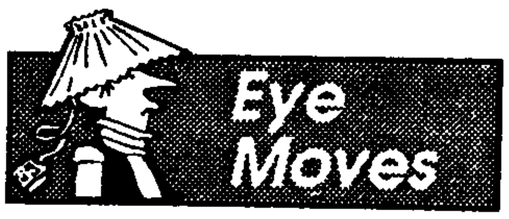

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MALE (33) SEEKS to adore/pamper sensual plump woman and share movies, concerts, affection, cuddles and conversation (London). Box 9409.

VERY ATTRACTIVE (ex-Bunny) law student (29) seeks meal-ticket, but prepared to consider similarly impoverished man if warm, intelligent, witty. London-ish. Photo please. Box 9509.

CURVY-SLIM INDEPENDENT attractive 40ish lady seeks 40ish unattached non-smoking tall stylish man with everything but girl. Box 9609.

FARMER 40 ex public school will wine and dine glamorous girl who loves country life. Photo please. Box 9709.

LONDON HACK, 50, widower, dead cultured, seeks female. Box 9809.

SATISFY MY satyriasis! Slim, blond man, cultured, friendly and independent, seeks nymph (18-45), any nationality, for uncomplicated passion. Central London. Box 9909.

RICH, PERFECTLY- formed Oxbridge aesthete (29) seeks pretty, sensuous, cultured Sophie/Caroline (or similar) (18-32). Leter and photo for reply. Box 10009.

MALE, 25, university student. Tall, quiet, likes theatre, cinema, pubs, seeks female for long term relationship. London. Box 10109.

LEICESTERSHIRE PROFESSIONAL, 34, Radio Four Long Wave listener, surprisingly good cook; seeks Catriona Young ono to share Times crosswords, gardening and love of life. Girls with similar extra-dry sense of humour and bad habits welcome; over-serious exponents of 24-hour news service and vegetarians need not apply. Box 10209.

BRIGHT, COUNTRY loving female producer (42, London) seeks warm-hearted, witty, confident male. Box 10309.

30 YEAR OLD, petite, attractive woman seeks wealthy and energetic partner for everlasting relationship. Box 10409.

WORLD'S GREATEST lover seeks female counterpart, objective earth movement. Box 10509.

UNIQUE OFFER: John, 37, successful professional fit intelligent attractive well-travelled and well-off non-smoker individualistic interests films more travel theatre available now but hurry with photograph. Box 10609.

SINGLE MALE (33), Yorks/Humbs seeks attractive girl (25-35) n/s to share the finer things in life. Interests, Nielsen Brahms Beethoven walking swimming photograph. Photo appreciated. Please reply to Box 10709.

WITTY INTELLIGENT outgoing good-looking virtuoso (24) needs similar virtuosa (24-30) to accompany him in duet to be played "con amore". Plent of sostenuto and cadenza. Photo please. Box 10809.

TALL, EDUCATED, sensuous, non-materialistic lady aged 27-50, wanted by 56-year-old similar London man. Box 10909.

MALE PROFESSIONAL 51, thoughtful, seeks creative, optimistic female graduate, imaginative, needing outlet, to invent useful things together, promulgate ideas, publish articles, have relaxed intermittent affair. Do you enjoy writing, drawing and thinking? Central London best. Box 11009.

MALE, 37, TALL, slim, professional, unattached, seeking leggy, lovely lady with verve and wit for passion, fun and frivolity. Could be discrete. London. Box 11109.

STUNNINGLY ATTRACTIVE Mancunian male 26 seeks similar female for alternative culture and wild sex. Box 1310.

I'M FEMININE, ex-public-school, fond of countryside and animals, enjoy occasional bridge; and am looking for romance with a caring, wonderful man in his fifties, preferably living in the South West. Box 11309.

DALE COOPER FBI wishes to meet Norma Jennings for investigations etc. Box 9309.

I'M 32, A MANAGING director, and still a rebel. Is there an attractive girl out there who could tame me? Box 11409.

SVELTE SENSUAL sophisticated woman sought by professional fit fifties man for discreet daytime dining and dalliance. Oxford/London. Box 11509.

CYRANO, WHERE are you? If words were kisses I would read your letter with my lips (!). Big sexy romantic men — speak to me of love. Southeast. Box 11609.

EDINBURGH/GLASGOW. Desired, leggy sensuous foxy lady by mid 50s executive frequently North. No strings. Photo. Box 3910.

ATTRACTIVE SENSUAL blonde professional seeks successful educated male to love eternally. Box 0810.

WILD WANTON woman (39) seeks fine frisky fellow for discreet dalliance. London. Photo please. Box 0910.

BUSINESSMAN GRADUATE 38 6'3" athletic single possibly attractive seeks much younger female NW but will travel. Photo helps. Box 1010.

BUSINESSMAN, 40, 6'2", fit solvent seeks attractive black/brown female for discreet mutually beneficial relationship afternoons evenings of fun lust etc. Box 1110.

VERY ATTRACTIVE fun loving female 30+ passionate romantic honest intelligent successful seeks similar male well educated reliable solvent must be fun to be with. Let's see what develops. Photo/phone no. please. Absolute discretion assured. Box 1210.

Eye Soldier On

THE DRINKING WOMAN'S Tom Cruise, dashing RAF officer, 35, serving in W. Europe, nerves of steel, a knob of butter, and the social life of a hermit crab, seeks dazzling female company for fun and good times. Box 11709.

ROYAL ENGINEER (NCO) seeks a witty intelligent female 20-35 for relationship. Must like travel, wining and dining and preferably doing crazy activities. Please hurry! Box 1810.

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OpeningLines **is a new service for personal advertisers, starting on January 15th. It's fun, effective and easy. To use it:**

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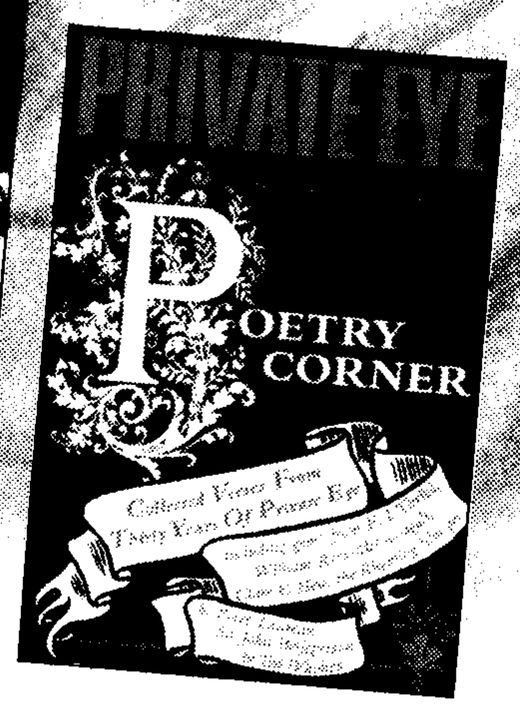

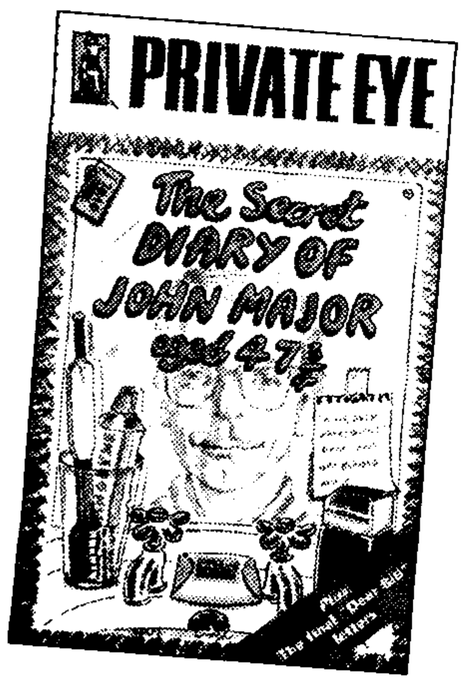

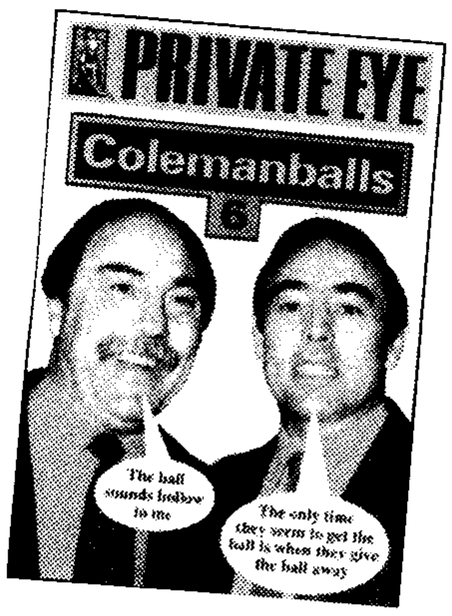
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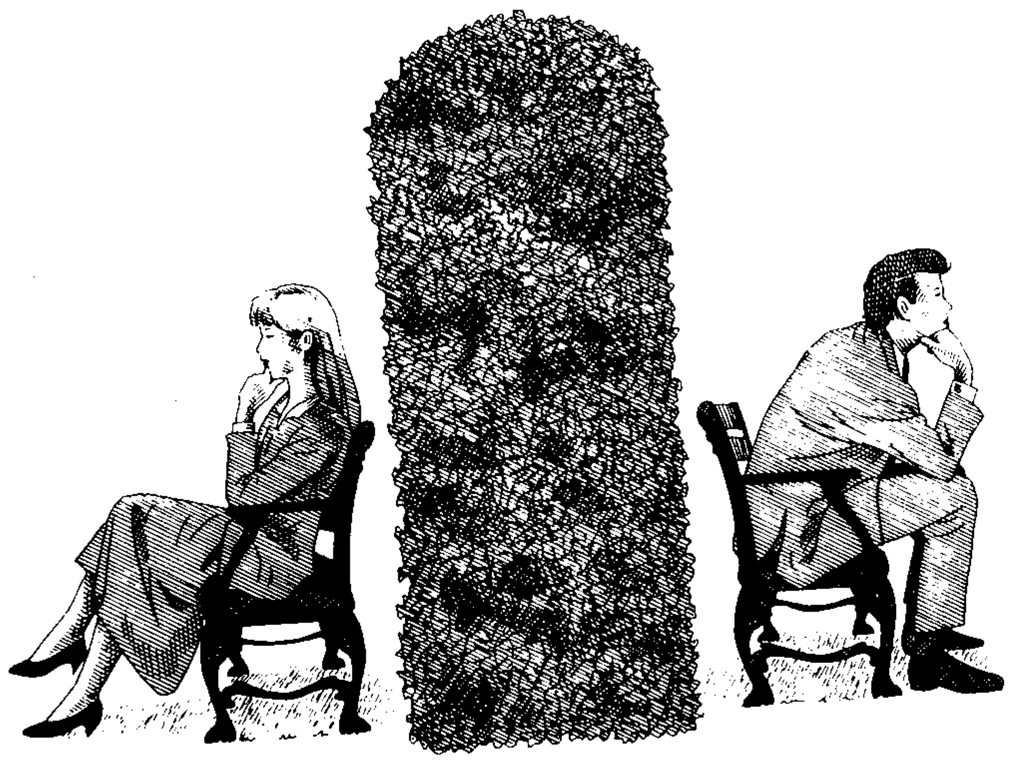
Understandably, many people are a little wary of Dateline. Some may feel that it's an admission of "failure" to use a service like ours.

Others may simply be sceptical about the chances of success.

But for everyone who has doubts, there are literally thousands from all walks of life who join Dateline every year.

Far from being in any way unusual, these are just ordinary people who prefer not to leave their happiness to chance.

Instead of waiting passively to see what the future may bring, they decide to grasp it with both hands. And week after week, they prove that Dateline works. This doesn't happen by accident, but by a thoughtful matching process which we have developed and refined for more than 20 years. It's worth taking a couple of minutes to learn how we go about it.



WHO ARE YOU? WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

If you respond to this advertisement, you'll be sent a very detailed questionnaire.

First, you're asked to answer some fairly straightforward questions about yourself: your general appearance, your background, your education, religion, politics – and so on.

Next you're asked to describe the kind of person you'd like to meet by answering the same set of questions.

You can even specify WHERE you'd like to meet them. (It's little use our finding you the right person in John O'Groats if you live at Land's End).

Then the questionnaire moves on to the really crucial part, where you answer questions about your interests, your personality and what you expect from your social life and personal relationships.

(Most people find the questionnaire both enjoyable and revealing).

Once the questionnaire is completed and returned to us, our computer goes to work, checking through the records of every single Dateline member, searching for the person who best matches the picture you've built up.

And it's important to remember that the computer may already be searching for YOU on someone else's behalf.

COMPUTERS AREN'T HUMAN

Our computer can't, of course, make relationships: only you can do that.

All the computer does is make the introductions and we find it usually selects six compatible people in each run.

Their names are given to you, all you have to do is arrange to meet. Naturally, there's no guarantee any introduction will be a success, but consider this: for once, you'll be meeting someone who

POSITIVELY WANTS TO MEET YOU – and that's a good start to any relationship.

Dateline, we must stress, is not for people who think it might be a bit of a lark, but for caring people who are looking for something more. Perhaps that describes you?

If it does, fill in the coupon and we'll send you our questionnaire, together with a free copy of our paperback "All you need is love" – a book full of genuine stories of how Dateline members meet their ideal partner. Naturally, your enquiry will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

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